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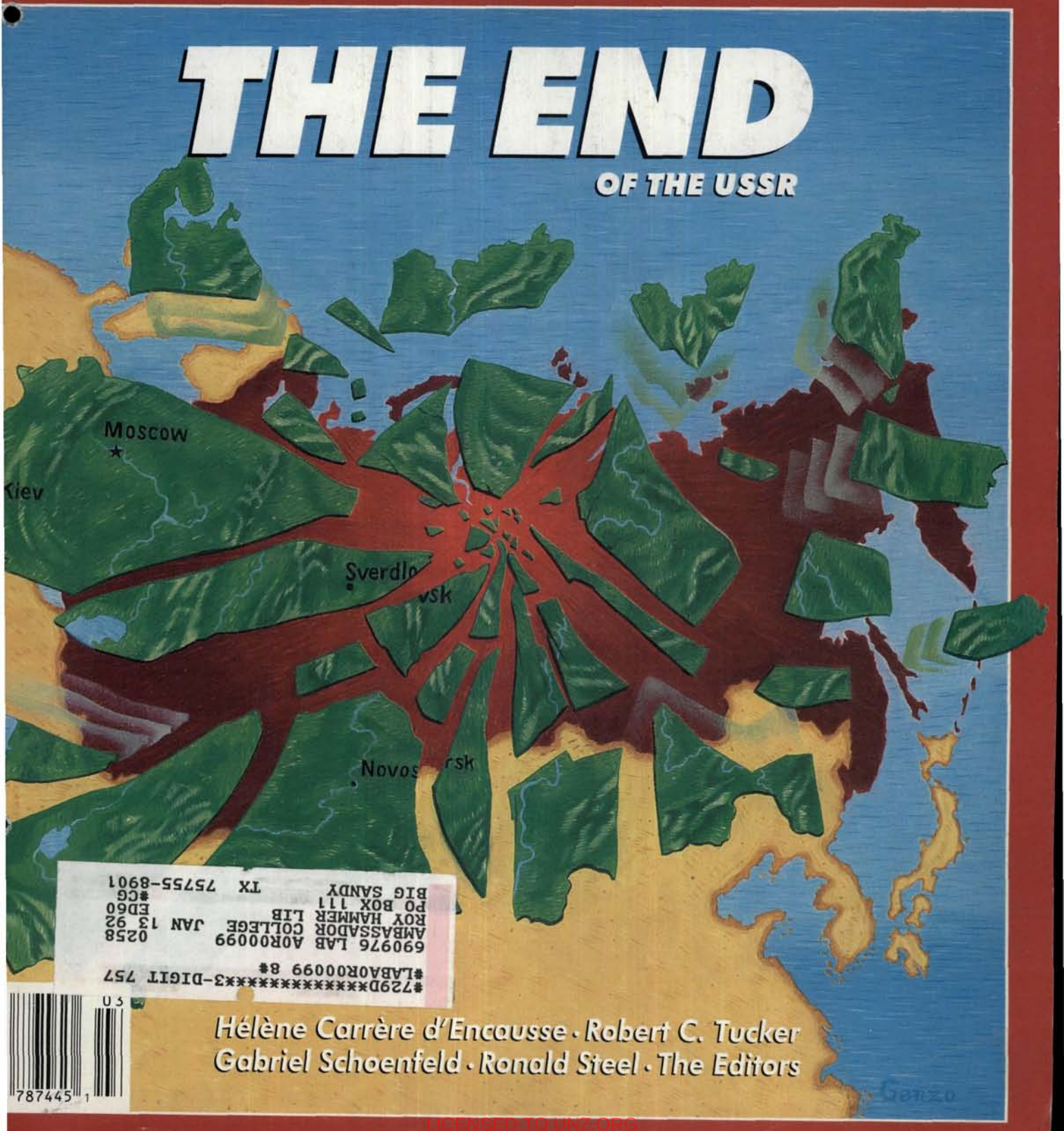
Michael Kinsley: Sharing hard times • Stanislaw Baranczak discovers a master writer



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Gay life, gay anger

To the editors:

The pessimistic, conclusive tone of Andrew Sullivan's "report" on the gay community (December 17) and your sober cover graphics suggest you might just as well have replaced the comma in the headline "Gay Life, Gay Death" with the familiar equal sign. This hardly seems fair to a people that has educated itself, changed its unsafe behavior, and through charity that amounts to self-levied taxes, has provided research, treatment, and even constructed health centers.

The American gay community has always been diverse, without a single agenda or culture. I can say from my own experience in Boston and New York that we are much more of a community today than we were ten years ago. Enduring the adversity of AIDS has made us stronger; we are confronting the plague mentality and rising above our own prejudices. The acceptance and inclusion of the man with Kaposi's Sarcoma lesions at the Saint's Halloween party, which Mr. Sullivan mentions, illustrates this. Such parties are a break in the battle, they are life-affirming, supporting, *tribal*. Walking in Boston's or New York's AIDS walks is a similar, even more inclusive, experience: gay, lesbian, straight, positive, negative, black, white, and Asian—it is at once enabling, humanizing, and unifying.

JIM HOOD
Boston, Massachusetts

To the editors:

I barely recognized ACT-UP-New York, to which I belong, in the grotesque caricature Andrew Sullivan serves up in his morose article. Sullivan states that ACT-UP's "most compelling characteristic" is that "perhaps a majority of its youthful members will be dead in a few year's time." Wrong. What's most compelling is that so many men and women, mostly gay but also bisexual and straight, have built a powerful activist organization to combat a disease.

After apparently attending only one general meeting and speaking to a few members, Sullivan concludes that ACT-UP is rife with fanaticism—except for the "coldly rational" Treatment and Data Committee. It was, however, the "hair-raising antics" of the ACT-UP militants that helped T&D members get the attention of scientists and federal officials. Furthermore, it wasn't only Treatment and Data that pressured Burroughs Wellcome to lower the price of AZT; the general membership of ACT-UP also fought that battle, and the tactics included some hair-raising demonstrations.

Mr. Sullivan cites claims that ACT-UP's members are predominantly gay men with HIV or AIDS, while Queer Nation comprises HIV-negatives concerned with non-AIDS, gay rights issues. This ignores the degree of overlap between the two groups. There are plenty of activists who come to ACT-UP on Monday night to organize against AIDS and who also attend Queer Nation on Thursday to strategize about anti-gay violence. There are Queer Nationals with HIV and AIDS, and ACT-UPers who are HIV-negative yet wholeheartedly committed to fighting the epidemic. Among the latter are the many lesbians and straight women who have become increasingly prominent in ACT-UP yet are absent from Mr. Sullivan's skewed portrait.

Most of us aren't AIDS activists for self-dramatization or to willfully "court rejection" by American society. We are, rather, committed to grass-roots organizing and militant direct action as essential elements in the fight against AIDS.

GEORGE DE STEFANO
New York, New York

To the editors:

In your December 17 editorial about government spending on AIDS research, "Dying for Dollars," you contend that "AIDS activists by and large accept" that "the share of the NIH budget devoted to AIDS should not exceed its current level of 10 percent." Furthermore, the militant activist group ACT-UP is now arguing for "increased funding for all aspects of biomedical research. . . . In other words, the AIDS lobby has been so effective it is now fighting battles for others."

Louis Sullivan, the secretary of health and human services, recently came to Yale to speak about public health before an audience of several hundred. Strategically positioned throughout the audience and armed with huge posters of Sullivan with a bull's-eye on his forehead and the word GUILTY emblazoned across his face, about twenty screaming, whistle-blowing, and wildly gesticulating ACT-UP members dared the secretary to take the podium. "Say the A-word, you fuck! Say it!" they shouted. When Mr. Sullivan mounted the rostrum and tried to reason with the protesters, Larry Kramer, the founder and spiritual leader of ACT-UP, rose from his seat and shouted: "You say don't fuck! Well, we say fuck you!" This prompted a new, fren-

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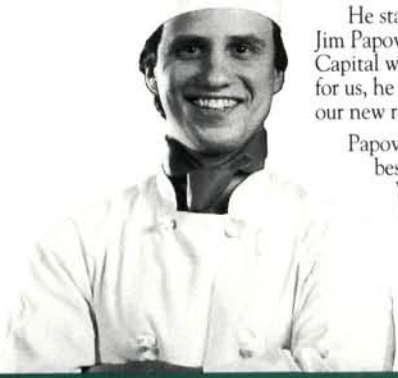

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zied round of obscenities. The abuse showed no sign of abating, so the secretary bravely went through with his speech as best he could. Sitting in the second row, I could not hear a word of it.

Somehow I do not find such unruly and disrespectful behavior (not to mention such a gross suppression of free speech) to be as magnanimous as you might. At least for now, ACT-UP continues to live up to its purely self-serving tradition of disruption and intimidation.

BILL MCSWAIN
New Haven, Connecticut

California drivel

To the editors:

I was sorry to discover that THE NEW REPUBLIC had wasted air fare in transporting its Los Angeles Diarist all the way to the West Coast when the same collection of stereotypical drivel could easily have been assembled on location in Washington, D.C. ("No Bonos," December 17). There may be a natural tendency for outsiders to consider everything south of the Tehachapi Mountains and north of the border as "Los Angeles," but you may consider that Hizzoner Mayor Bono presides over a small city that is about 130 miles from LA. Do your Washington Diarists ponder political developments in Baltimore to gain a perspective on the capital?

Your diarist, Sidney Blumenthal, hit the basics necessary to avoid any serious thought about the political and social realities of our nation's third-largest city: smog, political yo-yoism, rock music, the movies. There's no real need to discuss the tenuous state of the massive local aerospace industry, the potential impact of foreign studio ownership, the long overdue development of public transit systems, etc.

I will look forward to future Diarist reports from Managua, Beirut, and other places that seem more worthy of serious thought. I will close here as evening approaches; I would like to catch a few waves.

DANIEL J. STONE
Los Angeles, California

Thompson's novelty

To the editors:

Stanley Kauffmann can avoid the Jim Thompson bandwagon if he wants, but he should be more careful in his critical dismissals. In his review of *The Grifters* ("Different Sizes," December 17), Mr. Kauffmann claims that no good film has yet been made of a Thompson novel, and then cites *The Hot Spot* as a recent example. He's wrong on both counts. *The Hot Spot* is based on a novel by Charles Williams, *Hell Hath No Fury*, and a little-seen film of a Thompson novel, *The Kill-Off*, which played for a week or so in New York, got Mr. Thompson's black comic vision just right.

Rather than being, in Mr. Kauffmann's words, a "failed James M. Cain," Mr. Thompson seems to be a bizarre amalgam of satirist and proto new journalist. His early '50s explorations of the ordinariness of pure evil are decades ahead of their time in tone and sensibility. It seems, in the current Thompson mania, that we may have caught up to his innate sense of the sheer Swiftian rattiness of it all. Mr. Kauffmann should at least try to meet him on his own ornery terms.

MARK SCHAFFER
Rockville, Maryland

Internal remedies

To the editors:

As a recent LBJ intern, I appreciated David Greenberg's description of intern life ("Intern Hell," December 10). We are indeed an underpaid and overworked group. I disagree, however, with his premise that congressional internships are the domain of the sons and daughters of the rich and influential. There are support programs for those who seem to be less privileged.

Through the stipend provided by the LBJ program and a grant from the Stetson University Hollis Leadership Development Program, I—a Hispanic American of extremely limited means and even more limited influence—was able to participate in the intern program. At the various lectures held to introduce interns to the intricacies of the Hill, I met numerous young interns from across the country and representing various socioeconomic groups.

It would be naive to believe that Washington is a very egalitarian place. Money and influence are an integral part of its machinery. However, it would be an egregious error to assume that it is a private club. The means exist for minorities and those of working-class background to enter its gates. Once inside, though, it is up to the individual to make things happen.

ANTONIO CHARLES DASILVA
DeLand, Florida

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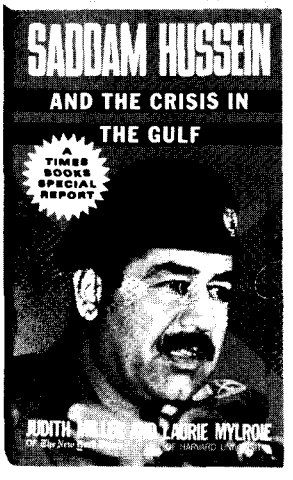
COUNTDOWN TO COMBAT
The inside story behind the events that may plunge America into war.

SADDAM HUSSEIN
AND THE CRISIS IN THE GULF

by JUDITH MILLER
The New York Times

and LAURIE MYLROIE
Harvard University



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FROM WASHINGTON

Sharing bad times

Partnership in a law firm was supposed to be a lifetime job. Even a job as an associate at a top firm was supposed to be secure until a partnership decision was made. But in this recession even blue-chip law firm partners are getting laid off. Judge Irving Kaufman, doyen of the New York bar, pouts in *The New York Times*: "At one time, law firms took care of their own, standing behind their partners and associates through hard times." And it does seem reasonable to ask why the burden of bad times must be borne by a few rather than shared by the many.

But lawyers aren't the only ones being laid off. Between June and December 700,000 people lost their jobs. If, as mainstream economists predict, unemployment peaks next summer at something like 7 percent, that will mean one-and-a-half million more people out of work. We will consider ourselves lucky if the recession is so mild. Yet the question for society is the same as for the law firm: Why can't this burden be shared more equitably?

If the economy shrinks by 2 percent—and, at the moment, most economists don't expect anything so severe—that would represent a loss of about $2,000 for every family of four. Painful, but not catastrophic. But the loss will not be spread around at $2,000 per family. For some families, the loss of income will be total. And that *will* be catastrophic.

Why does it work this way? Why, for example, does a company facing a downturn lay off 10 percent of its workers instead of trying to persuade all of its workers to share a one-tenth cut in hours and pay? Workers might even prefer a temporary one-tenth cut in pay alone to the insecurity of worrying about a layoff. Yet layoffs are routine; more reasonable arrangements are uncommon.

Labor markets are strange. "There isn't any unemployment of oranges," notes Harvard economist Martin Weitzman. Why doesn't the invisible hand find a job for practically every willing worker, the way it finds a mouth for practically every ripe orange? "Hundreds of thousands of person-hours have been spent on this question since Keynes, but we know surprisingly little." For a variety of reasons wages are "sticky downward," as economists say, meaning that adjustments for bad times take the form of less employment rather than lower pay. The forgone labor is lost for good—a dead loss to society, making us all poorer.

For a while, the Keynesians thought they'd solved the puzzle of unemployment through government's ability to adjust the levers of aggregate demand. That dream died in the stagflation of the 1970s. The supply-siders who came along next had a similar dream, based on a different theory. That dream is dying now (though the dreamers continue to blame our rude awakening on departures from the True Faith). Neither John Maynard Keynes nor Ronald Reagan, it seems, could abolish the business cycle, the economy's inevitable ups and downs. So the question is how to mitigate the cycle and handle its down side.

In 1984 Weitzman published a widely discussed book called *The Share Economy* (Harvard University Press), urging that workers be encouraged to take a large part of their income as a share of the company's revenues or profits, rather than as a fixed amount of money. His emphasis was not on the conventional benefits of profit sharing for the individual firm—making workers more loyal, etc.—but on the effect of such an arrangement on the general economy. In short, a company facing lower revenues would have far less incentive to lay off workers. Weitzman's theory has many embellishments, but that is the key point. The labor market would clear under virtually all circumstances. And this in turn would dampen the swings of the business cycle between recession and inflation.

In the past few years profit-sharing systems have multiplied in the American economy. So have contracting and consulting arrangements, part-time work, bonuses, and other employment relationships that implicitly tie remuneration to a company's fortunes. Weitzman says with a ghoulish chuckle that he and colleagues have been waiting for a recession to test their theory that flexible pay should mean fewer layoffs. He adds that one reason the 1980s boom continued for so long may have been the otherwise discouraging failure of wages to keep up with the general prosperity. "We all thought back in '84 or so that the boom would be put to an end by cost-push inflation. That hasn't happened."

The auto industry has made the connection explicit between pay flexibility and employment security. Ford and Gen-

continued on page 41

What makes bureaucrats so bureaucratic?

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JANUARY 21, 1991

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 3,966

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 204, Number 3, Issue 3,966, January 21, 1991. (Printed in the U.S. on January 2, 1991.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 7 & 14, July 15 & 22, Aug. 19 & 26, and Sept. 16 & 23, 1991) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1991 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322. For subscription problems call 800-274-6686.

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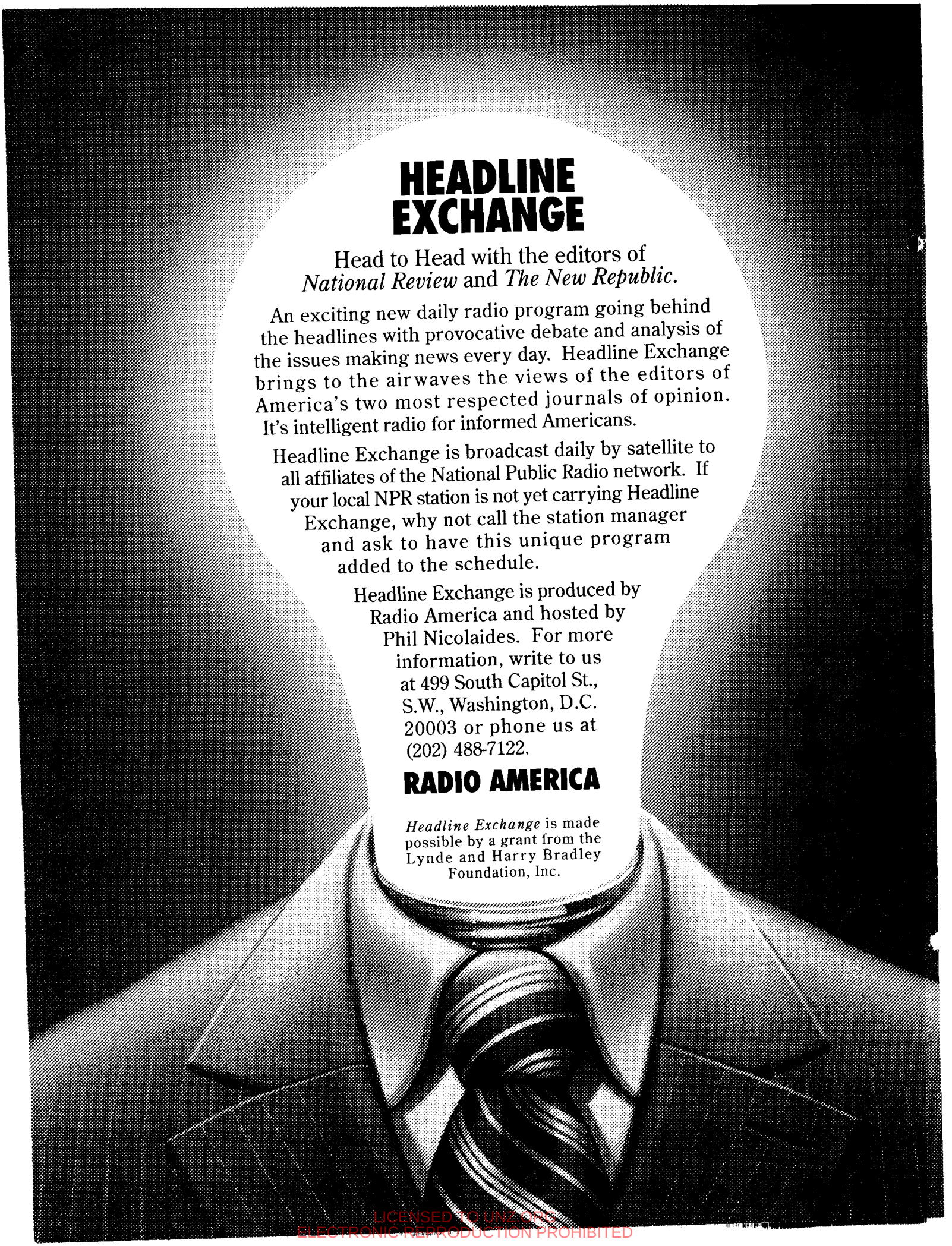
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JANUARY 21, 1991

LET THE PEOPLES GO

Historians of the late twentieth century will find it strange that so much attention was devoted by its intellectuals to the stray hints of the inevitable crisis of capitalism. Strange, because what was actually unfolding, though cloaked by secrecy, terror, and propaganda, was, of course, the crisis of socialism. For the most part, both liberals and conservatives missed it: liberals from a fear that it would erode the moral authority of their critique of capitalism, conservatives from a need for an invincible ideological enemy.

Now, however, it is inescapable. Everybody can see that the weaknesses of the Communist system were intrinsic, that we should marvel not at the sudden collapse of communism but at its ability to have sustained itself for so long. The weaknesses derived not from the West's military pressure, but from communism's fundamentally erroneous views of human nature and civilization. Against Marxist doctrine, there was no end to history, no triumph of materialism, no extinguishment of religion, no international proletarian revolution. The seventy-year effort to force history to conform to doctrine brought merely appalling decline and decay. The commissars failed to understand that men and women will not long discipline their energies and imaginations unless there is some benefit to their posterity. Liberty, family, religion, nation, the hope of reward—the critical incentives for economic advance and social cohesion—were suppressed in favor of an enslaving, enervating, false utopianism.

This refutation in history of the most corrupting and distorting ideology of modern times is the critical event of our era. What Leszek Kolakowski described as "the farcical element of human bondage" has finally been jettisoned even by the Kremlin itself, in belated recognition of what every Soviet subject already knew. This transforms not only the Soviet Union, but the West as well. Communist ideology waned not simply because lies could not be believed forever, but because certain truths about human society could not be indefinitely suppressed.

The most uncomfortable of those truths is the resilience of nationalism. From Marx onward, Communists systematically devalued the allure of the nation and of the nation-state as its expression. In fact, they asserted that the nation no longer existed, that, in Marx's words, "the workers have no country." This did not, of course, mean that they eschewed exploiting nationalism, in Europe and the Third World, for their own strategic purposes. But the pretense of the end of nationalism allowed them to dismember nations within their reach, and pretend they were doing nothing.

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Identities that did not exist, of course, could not be destroyed. The pale institutions the Soviet Union constructed for national expression—local Party organizations and the like—were, until Mikhail Gorbachev's admission of illegitimacy, shams for Moscow's control.

The resurgence of these nationalities thus has a particular piquancy for Moscow. It shows not only that communism was wrong, but that it was viciously cynical. It rested on the sort of imperialism that the Soviet leadership ritually condemned elsewhere. As soon as this was admitted in the Kremlin, the consequences were earth-shaking. Even now Mr. Gorbachev does not seem to understand this. Western commentators, fretting about stability or about reactionaries threatening to take power, do not understand it either. Perhaps the greatest lie of the Soviet Union has just been exposed. And the greatest consequence is now apparent: the starting point for the future of the region now called the USSR is not the existing imperial system, but the nations it replaced. It is up to them—and not Moscow—to decide what happens next.

It is a sad fact that Mr. Gorbachev's allies in the West, who sincerely believe in the cause of progressive reform in the Soviet Union, seem to wish that that these nations remain mute. Certainly the Bush administration has shown no great enthusiasm for their cause. In what might be the only case of the Bush administration actually snubbing a foreign government, the president humiliated the Lithuanian prime minister by refusing to greet her at the official White House entrance. Liberals, in eerie agreement, find the demands of the long-suppressed nationalities irritating. Why can't these irrepressible ethnics at least wait, they almost say, until the democratizing reforms are in place before they do their chauvinist mischief?

Why indeed? The answer is relatively straightforward. For the oppressed nationalities, seventy years of communism was more than the denial of individual freedoms. It was also—and for less advanced peoples, primarily—an assault on primordial identities and communal associations. Communism tried to crush the ethnic particularities under its rule, and induce cultural amnesia so that the formal ethnic structures of the Union would be without content. At the same time, it assaulted the religions that meshed seamlessly with these identities. Totalitarianism was an assault not only on natural rights and civil liberties but also on the most intimate psychological and spiritual affinities of millions of human beings.

It is no surprise, then, that these populations judge the Gorbachev reforms by how much they allow the emergence of national associations that, for much the greater part of the century, have been only fictitiously represented by so-called autonomous republics and regions. These fraudulent expressions of nations and peoples were part of the wider chimera of Soviet "constitutionalism." It makes no sense to the Ukrainians (or to us) that they should have to ask permission from Moscow, let alone more distant regions, in order to decide their political future.

When Mr. Gorbachev and his Western admirers argue that democratization within the Union must come first, they miss a fundamental point. They are implicitly arguing, against Hobbes among others, that democracy is logically and necessarily prior to sovereignty. But what the history of the modern West demonstrates, in case after case, is that in practice the settlement of nationhood is almost always prior to the emergence of democratic institutions. One can hardly speak of the emergence of a constitution if the identity of the very state it will constitute is under dispute.

Self-determination, to be sure, is no shibboleth, as Ronald Steel points out in this issue (see "Pax Sovietica," page 17). In many instances—newly independent Canada, India in 1947, even pre-Civil War America—its claims have to be measured against other, broader objectives. But in none of these cases were national identities so deep or so ruthlessly crushed for so long, as in the Soviet empire. In none of them were the historic crimes of the center—mass killing, political terror, economic immiseration—so profound or so long-standing. The Soviet empire, in short, is unlike the cosmopolitan Austro-Hungarian empire, unlike the live-and-let-live Ottoman empire, unlike even the locally permissive British empire—which, on the Roman model, tolerated all sorts of cultural, national, and religious expressions as long as they did not seriously threaten the imperial sway (and sometimes even when they did). The Soviet empire, with its totalitarian ambitions, sank its tentacles more deeply and painfully into the vitals of the nations it held fast.

One need not be enchanted by nationalism per se to recognize its claims. Ukrainian history is rife with ugliness, and the same can be said for the histories of other aspiring nations under the Soviet yoke. Moreover, the political re-emergence of suppressed peoples will surely give vent to these evils. The violence directed at minorities throughout the crumbling empire is already awful testimony to this, and any defense of the claims of the Soviet nationalities has to face up to it. But such hatreds are not inherent in nationalism. The history of nationalism in Western Europe shows not only how costly those hatreds can be but also that they can eventually be overcome. And, as Hélène Carrère d'Encausse argues (see "Springtime of Nations," page 20), it may be that the mellowing of such sentiments can only occur when national identities have some space for expression. Mr. Gorbachev's constitutionalism will be as self-defeating as his economics until he recognizes this elementary fact of human history.

The last argument of those rationalizing continued Soviet hegemony is that of stability. A great power is needed in the Soviet Union, it is argued, to balance the influence of Germany to the West and China to the East. The power vacuum in Eastern Europe will tempt a redrawing of boundaries, which could unleash new strife on the peripheries of Germany and Poland; China will be tempted to new mischief; India will search for new allies against China. Many of these worries are

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well founded. It is not in the interests of the United States to promote chaos and instability across the Eurasian continent. But it is our bet that greater chaos will ensue if the nationality issue is not addressed. Mr. Gorbachev's instincts are as wrong on this as they are on economics. What is needed is a clean break not simply from neo-Marxist economics but also from Soviet imperialism. If this is achieved quickly, a more consolidated and powerful Russian republic will likely emerge to restore some semblance of a balance of power. The attempt to rescue the collapsing Union will simply intensify the power vacuum rather than fill it.

What can we actually do about any of this? For the most part, nothing. National liberation is in the hands of the Azeris and Armenians, the Ukrainians and Lithuanians, the Tatars and the Uzbeks, and others whose names we and surely George Bush do not even know. Our active intervention is superfluous. But we can certainly make contact with the fledgling leaders of the Soviet republics, and move toward diplomatic relations with the nascent nation-states. This sounds radical now; it will seem a commonplace a year from now. In recent months Mr. Gorbachev—who, after all, is still an unelected creature of the Soviet system he is trying to reform—has turned increasingly, perhaps decisively, away from the embryonic democratic forces in Russia, the republics, and his own entourage and toward the army, the KGB, and the Party apparat. The resignation of Eduard Shevardnadze is only the most dramatic piece of evidence. But if Mr. Gorbachev does not see the whirlwind he has sown, the West should. For five years the moral and strategic interests of the United States lay with the success of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev. Now they lie with his failure.

The rest is symbolism. But at this critical moment in history, symbolism is not to be despised. What we are witnessing is the end of two enormous modern wrongs—the ideology of communism and the hegemony of Russia. Those who are truly concerned about the soul and future of Russia, as well as those concerned for the liberty of the peoples throughout its empire, should exchange their handwringing for celebration. Liberals are not usually in the vanguard of those lamenting the decline of empires. Indeed, there is something grotesque about liberals who rejoice at the decline of every empire save this one, and who celebrate the emergence of any pseudo-nationalism in the Third World but balk at the real thing when it arises in the Soviet Union.

The recently deceased English philosopher Michael Oakeshott once described the history of totalitarianism as government by a book of fiction. Rulers read from the book, he wrote, but occasionally, when reality intervenes, they have to take their eyes off it in order to govern the real world. As the real world changes, and the fiction becomes decreasingly related to events, the rulers sometimes have to abandon the book entirely. In the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev has just closed the book. Let others now tell their stories.

MIDNIGHT'S CONVERSION

Salman Rushdie, in whose cause More, Hus, Bruno, Milton, Galileo, Spinoza, Locke, Voltaire, Jefferson, Mill, Tucholsky, Mann, Babel, Mandelstam, Koestler, and Sakharov have been adduced, has cut a deal. He has decided, as he wrote in *The New York Times*, "to affirm the two central tenets of Islam . . . and thus to enter into the body of Islam after a lifetime spent outside it." Less spiritually, he has reversed his insistence on the paperback publication of *The Satanic Verses*, agreed not to authorize any further translations of the book, and declared, "I do not agree with any statement in my novel *The Satanic Verses* uttered by any of the characters who insults the prophet Mohammed, or casts aspersions upon Islam, or upon the authenticity of the Holy Koran, or who rejects the divinity of Allah."

Mr. Rushdie has been in hiding since February 14, 1989. He would like to have his life back. He *should* have his life back: he was the victim of a classical evil, and those who were reminded of the great martyrs of democracy were not wrong. None was more eloquent about the freedom of the imagination, about the nobility of the struggle for an open society against the old theocratic darkness, than the fugitive writer himself. Whoever clung to any sign of liberalization in the Muslim world, certainly, clung to Mr. Rushdie. And suddenly comes his surrender.

Is his abjuration sincere? It is impossible to say. He appears to have been deeply affected by a meeting with Muslim scholars on Christmas Eve. He says that he has been reading Dostoyevsky, and learning the spiritual lessons that suffering teaches. And conversions do occur; the soul takes odd turns, at least the living soul. If Mr. Rushdie's new religiosity is real, though, it is utterly unforeshadowed in anything he has written; his books and his essays have turned a fascinated but skeptical gaze upon the forms of religious life, have brandished an extravagant anti-clericalism.

Mr. Rushdie's apologia in the *Times* suggests that his new feeling for the faith is less metaphysical than communal, that he wants to believe less than he wants to belong: "I am certainly not a good Muslim. But I am able now to say that I am a Muslim; it is a source of happiness to say that I am now inside, and a part of, the community whose values have been closest to my heart." Never mind, at least for a second or two, that it is this same community, or the largest part of it, that seeks to kill him. (A few weeks before Mr. Rushdie's recantation, representatives of the Muslim community in England flew to Tehran to ask that Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against him not be lifted.) And never mind, at least for a second or two, that it is the place of the writer and the intellectual to be outside, not inside; not to be a part of, but to be not a part of.

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His exhaustion with the life of a pariah, his wish for a home, is not hard to understand. And many books don't appear in paperback. And the pull of tradition is often a good, nourishing, honorable pull. The trouble is that when Mr. Rushdie thought differently, when he demanded the right to defy his tradition, to speak his mind freely and transgressively about it, people risked things, and people lost their lives, in the struggle over his right. Now he says that he has settled his identity, changed his mind. All right. But will he apologize to the book dealers as he has apologized to the book burners?

Like Brecht's Galileo, Mr. Rushdie seems to have discovered that "it is not a question of the satellites of Jupiter, but of the peasants of the Campagna." Perhaps, then, this was a forced conversion, a change of appearances instead of a change of heart, a bowing to circumstances for the sake of peace. The apologia on the op-ed page certainly reads like one of those chilling and transparent exercises in "self-criticism" familiar to students of a different variety of totalitarian repression. The piece must have been a part of the deal. If that is all it was, it stands as the most cynical thing that Mr. Rushdie has ever written about Islam, much more disdainful of the faith than any of the fantasies in his novel.

It is certainly disdainful of Mr. Rushdie's vocation. The most sickening sentences are these: "As to the question of total withdrawal of the book, I would say this: In spite of everything, *The Satanic Verses* is a novel that many of its readers have found to be of value. I cannot betray them." This, de haut en bas, is what he has to say about his book! And now he describes it as a cautionary fable about the costs of faithlessness ("how a man is destroyed by losing God"). In these ways he *has* betrayed the book's readers, and the book. He may have gained the fellowship of believers, he may even have gained the world to come, but in this world, and in the fellowship of democrats, he has forsaken the principles that his novel and its defense championed.

The politics of the recantation are not clear, but a reading of the press reports suggests that he has turned to Egyptian clerics for assistance against Iranian clerics. The mullahs of Cairo, remember, always opposed Khomeini's death sentence, and on grounds of Islamic law, though they did agree that the book should be banned. Two Egyptian officials, one of them the head of the Supreme Council of Scholars of Islamic Affairs in Cairo, attested in London to the writer's conversion and declaration. (So did Mr. Hesham el-Essawy, the chairman of the Islamic Society for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance, who provided the irony of the year. A few days after Mr. el-Essawy accepted the hounded Mr. Rushdie back into the fold, he denounced a campaign for the beatification of Queen Isabella of Spain on the grounds that under her rule "Muslims and Jews were forced at the point of a sword to convert to Christianity or die.") Mr. Rushdie seems to be contemplating a visit to Cairo, which is all that President Mubarak needs.

The deal, in other words, is not only spiritually peculiar, it is also politically peculiar. For surely the Egyptian mullahs cannot deliver the Iranian mullahs. No sooner had the recantation been announced than Radio Tehran dismissed it. Ayatollah Khomeini had proclaimed explicitly, after all, that his sentence of death will stand even if Mr. Rushdie becomes "the most pious Muslim in the world." Since Khomeini's death, the reaffirmation of his *fatwa* against Mr. Rushdie has been the Iranian government's sop to the Iranian right, Rafsanjani's least expensive gift to Khameini. If Mr. Rushdie's conversion was a ploy, it may have been a bungled one.

If it was not a ploy, however, he has not yet learned to speak like a true believer, that is, with a trace of humility, with an echo of anguish about the commotion that the course of his inner development has caused. When a prominent British playwright, one of the members of the International Committee for the Defense of Salman Rushdie and His Publishers, expressed regret about Mr. Rushdie's switch, Mr. Rushdie impudently told a television interviewer that "it's none of his business." His persecution was all of our business; his conversion is none of our business. And then he explained: "Presumably they were campaigning on my behalf because they felt I had the right to write whatever I wanted, whatever I thought. If I only have free speech if I happen to agree with [his critic's] atheistic position, then that's not really much of a position at all."

This is pure demagoguery. Mr. Rushdie's right to be a devout Muslim is exactly Mr. Rushdie's right to be a dissident Muslim. But the stakes are greater than the fate of one man's soul, and he was the one who raised them so high. His recantation represents a terrible blow to the besieged liberal forces of the Muslim world. It does not, of course, vitiate the principles on which the defense of the writer and the novel was raised. The arguers for cultural and political freedom have not been refuted, they have only been disappointed. Anyway, they have work elsewhere: according to PEN, there are about 350 writers sweating in prisons around the world. The Rushdie affair has not lost its villain, only its hero.

NOTEBOOK

DRIVING MATTERS: A leaflet in Saudi Arabia distributed by religious zealots lists the names of forty-nine "fallen women" who are "sowing corruption on earth." Their sin: they challenged the ban on women driving in the Kingdom. The leaflet lists the ages of all of them, and the phone numbers of some. The group is predominantly young; several seem to be physicians or Ph.D.s. The deviations of the husbands and fathers are also visited on the women. One, Dr. Faten al Zamel,

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is the wife of an "Americanized secularist." Another, Munira al Kana'an, is the wife of a "communist." Hind al Nahid is the daughter of a "communist." Two are the wives of Shiites. "These are the names of the fallen women and of the secularists and communists who stand behind them. Do what you see fit," the leaflet concludes.

NOSY HARPER'S: Journalism is a prying business, whose task is to ferret things out of the work, and sometimes the lives, of public figures. The respecting of privacy is not what journalism does best, even though it has made itself the defender of privacy against others. Still, not everybody people talk about is a public figure, and sometimes the professional disrespect for privacy turns into nastiness. Example: *Harper's* this month publishes an excerpt, chosen to make the writer look ridiculous, of a communication from Gordon Lish to the students in his well-known fiction-writing workshop. The magazine storms into the classroom, violating the wise taboo that protects the vocation of teaching from the practitioners of snooping. Moreover, *Harper's* makes it seem as if the letter were not a private communication between Mr. Lish and his students, but actually a submission by the author himself. So add to the magazine's sin of doing something indecent the sin of doing something fraudulent.

ATTENTION SOVIETOLOGISTS: We don't run footnotes, but if you're curious about the sources for the many quotations in Robert C. Tucker's piece, which appears on page 29, you can send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, 128 Encina Commons, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-9668. ●

Biosphere II, bogus bubble.

LOST IN SPACE

By Alex Heard

I spent too much time in biology class making sketches of a giant mantis pincering villagers, but I still recall the basics of the scientific method. First you set up an experiment to test a *hypothesis*. If the observed facts support it, you formulate a *theory*. Your colleagues (other scientists) can *criticize* your methods, and you're obliged to answer their arguments with objectivity and rigor.

But there is one other option: if you don't like what they're saying, you can threaten to *sue 'em*. This works especially well if the person funding your experiment is a rich Texan whose lawyers can promise to tie up your enemies in court for a long, long time, costing them big even if they win. These last two steps are part of Scientific Method II, the one apparently being practiced by the people running the Biosphere II project in Oracle, Arizona.

Biosphere II is an attempt to enclose, in a 3.15-acre glass-and-metal structure largely shut off from the outside world (a.k.a. Biosphere I), an ecosystem containing miniature patches of rain forest, desert, marshland, ocean, savanna, and cropland. Biosphere II isn't entirely self-supporting—it's helped along by a 5.2 megawatt power plant—but the eventual goal is to design a solar-powered version that can exist, sealed, for a hundred years, manned by up to a dozen Biospherians. These futuristic techies will keep an eye on the machines, till the soil, harvest crops, slaughter animals, and—judging by the skintight red costumes they put on for the TV cameras—study reruns of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" for style hints. Later this year eight Biospherians will be sealed in for a two-year test run.

This for-profit project, which Edward Bass is funding to the tune of an estimated $40 million to $100 million, has caught the imagination of the nation's media and has received glowing coverage in, among other places, *Time*, *The Washington Post*, and on ABC's "Prime Time Live." The goals, we're told, are to learn more about Earth by studying its systems up close and, most important, to develop the technology necessary to colonize other planets with Biosphere structures. John Polk Allen and Mark Nelson, two of the project's founders, promised in *Space Biospheres* (1987) that "we will be ready by 1992 to plan, outfit, and set in motion an expedition that can succeed in [Martian] settlement." Biosphere II's press kit also speaks of broad commercial applications in environmental management, and says that biospheres and spinoff technology will be marketed to corporations, governments, universities, and homeowners.

The press stories do cite a couple of critics, who gripe that Biosphere II isn't really science. To learn anything of value from it, they argue, there should be a duplicate Biosphere II as a control—which there won't be. Some scientists note that the next-largest successful enclosed ecosystem is a small glass globe containing shrimp, water, algae, and a few microorganisms. Biosphere II, they say, is too great an experimental leap. It won't work, and will end up as the world's most expensive vanity weedpatch.

While calling around about the project I quickly reached equilibrium, with one scientist saying it's visionary, the next insisting it's a mess. Only time will tell, of course. But until then, one thing is pretty clear: Biosphere II people are more than a little sensitive to criticism. Three critics who spoke to journalists found out just how much. David Stumpf, Wayne Collins, and Merle Jensen, former employees of Biosphere's main scientific contractor, the Environmental

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Research Laboratory (ERL), were interviewed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. Stumpf, a plant biochemist, described a 1986 meeting with several Biosphere II bigwigs, where he presented data that indicated the Biosphere's carbon dioxide levels would fall so low that plant growth would be stunted, creating a food shortage. Stumpf said John Polk Allen, director of research and development for the project, "interrupted quite rudely, and described how my approach—traditional science—was not . . . for the Biosphere." In the CBC broadcast, Stumpf summarized Allen's theoretical approach as: "It would work because it would work." Collins backed up Stumpf's account, describing Allen's outburst as "unanticipated verbal violence."

Not exactly libelous stuff. But even before the program aired, all three were contacted by lawyers representing Space Biospheres Ventures, Biosphere II's parent company, and Carl Hodges, head of the ERL. They were warned they'd be sued unless they retracted their statements. Jensen and Collins, told by their lawyer that even if they won they would rack up huge legal fees, both signed letters in which they softened their comments. Stumpf hasn't signed anything, and to date has not been sued.

Why are the Biospherians so touchy? They declined to talk about this, so I can only offer theories. Obviously, with so much investment capital at stake, they worry about their public image. Their colorful commune past doesn't make one eager to book passage on one of their Mars-bound space greenhouses. The Biosphere II project has its roots in a commune—the Synergia Ranch—established outside Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1967 by the aforementioned John Polk Allen, a metallurgist and graduate of Harvard Business School. You can read more about it in *The Communal Experience*, a book by historian Laurence Veysey. Veysey spent five weeks at the ranch in 1971, and paid particular attention to Allen, who was the undisputed head honcho. (Veysey gives him the pseudonym Ezra. In fact, commune members did use assumed names, but preferred livelier ones like Holerat, With-It, and Green. Allen's handle was Johnny Dolphin.) Ezra's goal was to create new "planetary citizens" who were as comfortable in the world of theater as that of science. Even back then, he was a hothead who liked to teach through intimidation. "Suddenly, it might be anywhere, Ezra will explode into wrath," Veysey wrote. "Calmly in control of himself one minute, in the next he will be shouting the most hurtful words conceivable in a furious assault upon the ego of some trapped individual."

Ezra told his cowed acolytes, most of whom were young, well-educated, middle-class dropouts, that they would form an elite that would survive the coming global nuclear holocaust. Ezra claimed to have flown to a neutral country during the Cuban missile crisis, and said that when things on Earth got too hot, the Synergia people should be safely living in a remote spot, such as the Australian outback. Later they would comb the wreckage and start anew: "Western civilization isn't simply dying. It's dead," Ezra explained. "We are probing into its ruins to take whatever is useful for the building of the new civilization to replace it." A few years later in Fort Worth, a theater group that grew out of the artistic experiments at Synergia Ranch staged a play, "Kabuki Blues," in which actors rocket to Mars and watch Earth go up in flames through a telescope.

Heady visions, but when Veysey left, Synergia Ranch was mired in a low-tech rut. It had the requisite geodesic dome (where the drama troupe performed), but it also had a wrecked greenhouse and a garden that was as bountiful as a sand ashtray. That began to change in 1974, when an eccentric young man named Edward Bass—one of the four heirs to the Perry Bass oil fortune—came to the ranch to buy handmade furniture. He liked what he saw, began taking part in drama classes, took a nickname (Sharkey), and started paying for synergistic projects around the world, including: The Caravan of Dreams, an experimental theater in Fort Worth; a rain forest research site in Puerto Rico; a trekkers' hotel in Katmandu; experimental farms in Australia; and Sun-Space Ranch in Arizona—future site of Biosphere II.

The group wasn't very eager for publicity back then—Bass has always been media shy—but anything with that much synergy can't help but bust loose from time to time. The most undesired splash came in 1983, when a West German magician and musician named Johann Hansler (who performed in a two-man stage act called The Too Much Brothers), visited Synergia Ranch. According to Hansler's lawyers, Bernd Zabel, the ranch caretaker, decided to show Hansler how to use a .357 magnum pistol, so he set cans atop a broken refrigerator hulk on the property, showed Hansler how to shoot the pistol, and left him alone to plink happily. Unfortunately, the refrigerator was full of dynamite, and the first time Hansler fired low, it blew up, sending out shrapnel that injured Hansler's right leg, which was later amputated below the knee.

Fortunately for all the blameless pigs and bats who must live in Biosphere II, the synergists hired real scientists to help design and construct it among them: Carl Hodges, director of the ERL, which designed the Land Pavilion at Walt Disney's EPCOT Center; and Walter Adey, head of the Smithsonian's Marine Systems Laboratory. But many old faces are still behind the scenes, pulling levers. Margret (Firefly) Augustine, who holds a B.A. in architecture from the Institute of Ecotechnics, is CEO and architect of Biosphere II. Mark (Green) Nelson is CEO of the Institute. Bernd Zabel, the handgun man, is director of construction for Biosphere II. He's also—yikes—one of the eight Biospherians. The CBC crew questioned Augustine about her Institute of Ecotechnics degree, pointing out that the Royal Institute of Architects said it was non-recognized. Her odd answer, repeated several times, was, "I have a *degree* in architecture from the Institute of Ecotech-

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nics." CBC traveled to London to see what exactly the vaunted Institute of Ecotechnics consists of. They found an art gallery with a few pictures of Ecotechnics projects stuck in one corner of the room.

Yes, I know, faith in credentials is a sign of mossback "linear" thinking. But let's generously assume that Biosphere II works, and its backers somehow raise the incalculable amounts needed to send one to Mars. Wanna go? You can get an idea of the lifestyle from *Space Biospheres*, in which Allen describes the coming Mars colony. Four radiation-proof biospheres, each providing full "life/esthetic support" for ten people, will be arranged around a central technical center with a reserve ocean. Money will be earned by the production and sale of Mars-based products and technical info. Meetings of the Strategic Command, a governing body, will follow Robert's Rules of Order. Commingling will take place at weekly "reserve ocean rendezvous." These meetings will consist of casual "face-to-face contact" by all members of the Mars community. Of course, somebody will have to set the agenda. If Allen makes the journey, I'll bet the meetings follow Ezra's Rules of Order. If so, one more prominent Earthian ecosystem will be introduced to Mars: Hell.

ALEX HEARD is a Washington writer.

New York's surprising ethnic future.

IN LIVING COLORS

By Peter D. Salins

New York City, America's premier metropolis and its only municipal candidate for "world class" status, is widely assumed to be in decline. Among the many emblems of the malaise—Wall Street in retreat, a rash of homicides, a replay of the fiscal crisis—one hovers just below the surface of polite discourse: New York's changing racial profile. The city's demographic range, which not so long ago seemed to run from Archie Bunker to Jacqueline Onassis, with a large cohort of smart, white yuppies in between, now appears dominated by poor minorities. The subtext of a lot of the grousing, that this growing minority population threatens New York's economy and its social fabric, is false on two counts. New York actually has a more balanced racial mix than most large U.S. cities. And the growing ethnic pluralism that characterizes the city may turn out to be its salvation rather than its downfall.

Since the end of World War II most older cities of the East and Midwest have experienced a steady exodus of white residents moving to the suburbs. Until the 1970s their places were taken by a large influx of Southern blacks. From the 1970s on, the migration of native-born American blacks into the cities has dwindled even as white mobility has continued unabated. In most large cities east of the Mississippi this has resulted in dramatic population declines because the birth rate of their remaining residents hasn't been large enough to offset white flight.

New York has largely confounded this picture of big city "racial succession" through its continuing influx of immigrants and in-migration of Americans from other places. With only 3 percent of the nation's population, the city now receives 15 percent of all legal immigrants. Although New York's current size is a matter of dispute, since 1950 the city's population has fallen at most by 6 percent. (In contrast, Chicago's has shrunk by 18 percent; Philadelphia's by 21 percent; Detroit's by 44 percent. Even Washington, D.C., despite the federal government's growth, has 23 percent fewer people today than in 1950.)

Thanks to immigration, New York's minorities are also far more diverse than those of other U.S. cities, and becoming more so all the time. New York's population is more than 50 percent "minority," as are those of most other large American cities. But because of the number of ethnics, particularly Hispanics, who have moved to New York, the black share of New York's population is only 24 percent, the smallest of any large city east of the Rockies. And unlike the black proportion of most cities, New York's hasn't grown much over the past two decades: it was actually slightly smaller in 1987 than it was in 1980. New York now has nearly as many Hispanics as blacks. Only Los Angeles and San Antonio have larger proportions of Hispanic residents. In absolute numbers, New York is the most Hispanic city in the nation, and its Hispanic citizens are uniquely diverse, with the majority coming from at least eight Spanish-speaking nations.

New York also has a rapidly growing Asian population. Although Asian births accounted for only 5 percent of the total births in New York in 1987, Asians constituted more than 20 percent of all immigrants that year. At the same time, the much-celebrated influx of white yuppies from the suburbs and beyond has largely offset the traditional tide of suburban out-migration of the middle-aged middle class. European immigration too has experienced a dramatic revival. The ranks of European immigrants, who now account for 10 percent of the total, will swell even further with the growing exodus of Soviet Jews and large numbers of other East bloc refugees. A stable white population of 40 percent, and a rapidly growing Asian cohort that may reach 15 to 20 percent, might actually reduce New York's black and Hispanic shares below their current levels.

New York's new wellsprings of ethnic diversity are not only shattering stereotypes about the city's population. They are also propelling its economy. Consider

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the familiar paradigm of deteriorating neighborhoods. In the 1970s New York was losing more than 40,000 apartments a year to abandonment and destruction. Today many of the worst neighborhoods are reviving, and housing abandonment has been reduced to a trickle. Some of this is the product of "gentrification," but mostly it is the result of immigrants colonizing precincts that other New Yorkers have given up on.

Queens in particular has been transformed. The No. 7 IRT subway line cuts an impressive international swath through the western half of the borough. It emerges from its East River tunnel to graze the edge of the vibrant Greek community in Astoria, proceeds to bisect a vast zone of Latin American settlement in Jackson Heights and Corona, and reaches its terminus in Flushing amid New York's most heterogeneous Asian complex, which is dominated by large concentrations of Koreans and Chinese with a strong admixture from the Indian subcontinent.

In Brooklyn Asians and Caribbean Hispanics have revived the badly deteriorated neighborhood of Sunset Park, and Haitians, notwithstanding their status as among the poorest of immigrants, have brought new vigor to East Flatbush and Crown Heights. Jews from diverse national and theological backgrounds have imparted social stability and rising real estate values to a number of formerly troubled areas: Hasidim in Williamsburg, Syrians and other Middle Easterners in Gravesend and Sheepshead Bay, and Russians in Brighton Beach. New York's least loved neighborhoods in the Bronx and upper Manhattan are being reclaimed by Dominicans, and the expansion of Manhattan's Chinatown is reversing the severe blight of much of the Lower East Side.

The housing and settlement patterns of New York's immigrants are only a reflection of their integration into the city's economic life. In addition to the well-known commercial niches that particular ethnics have carved out—Korean produce markets, Indian newsstands, Greek luncheonettes, etc.—the less skilled immigrants such as Dominicans and Haitians have proved indispensable to the success of low-wage manufacturing and service industries.

New York's ethnic profile also contradicts the popular perception of the city's racial politics. Politics here do not revolve around race, or even ethnicity, because no single ethnic group commands a voting majority, and none cares to enter even transitory ethnic coalitions. The black-Hispanic coalition that New York's liberal and black political leaders have long yearned for seems an ever more distant prospect as the Hispanic bloc is increasingly fragmented by nationality and class differences. David Dinkins was elected mayor because New Yorkers had tired of Ed Koch after twelve years, not because he was black. Race may explain his appeal to the majority of black voters, but the Hispanic, Jewish, and other white voters who provided his margin of victory were attracted precisely because Dinkins promised to rise above racial politics.

There are, of course, tensions involved in this ethnic chaos: clashes between old and new ethnics; resentment at rising real estate prices in booming neighborhoods; increasing crime rates owing to the youth of many new immigrant populations. But on balance, the ethnic caldron that characterizes New York's demographics is a good thing. The city's immigrant-driven culture has given it a ragged energy reminiscent of American cities at the turn of the century. How much better a fate than that of so many other American metropolises, their newly rehabilitated but half-empty downtowns surrounded by a sea of physical, social, and population decline.

PETER D. SALINS is professor of urban planning at Hunter College.

Young John, rookie of the year.

MAJOR PLAYER

By Edward Pearce

LONDON

In March 1981 I received a dinner invitation from the chairman of the Adam Smith Institute, a free market think tank here. "Are you free on Thursday," asked Dr. Madsen Pirie, "to meet the coming man?" That evening I was introduced to John Major, now the perplexed-looking, heavy-spectacled prime minister of Britain. He was a soft-voiced, gentle, and intelligent member of Parliament, but without a scrap of that instinct to show off that is common even to modest politicians. He also revealed a sharp, if prosaic, knowledge of his own district, pointing out that, despite the early 1980s recession, his constituency had seen 400 new electrical mains installed on its industrial parks that year. No one could doubt Pirie's judgment.

There is a widely held view that John Major's rise to the top was an exercise in improbability. In fact, it was logical verging on inevitable. Despite his modest background, he had some critical talents for success in the British system and especially the Tory party—intelligence, diligence, discretion, an ability to operate as an insider, and, above all, affability.

Major's background has been seized upon by journalists to provide dabs of much-needed color. He was the high school dropout son of an aging vaudeville acrobat; after high school he was a construction worker and applied to be a bus conductor, the person on London's double-deckers who collects the fares. (He was turned down.) It's less well known that his father went bankrupt, and eventually blind as well. As a child, he acted as his father's eyes while guiding him on his

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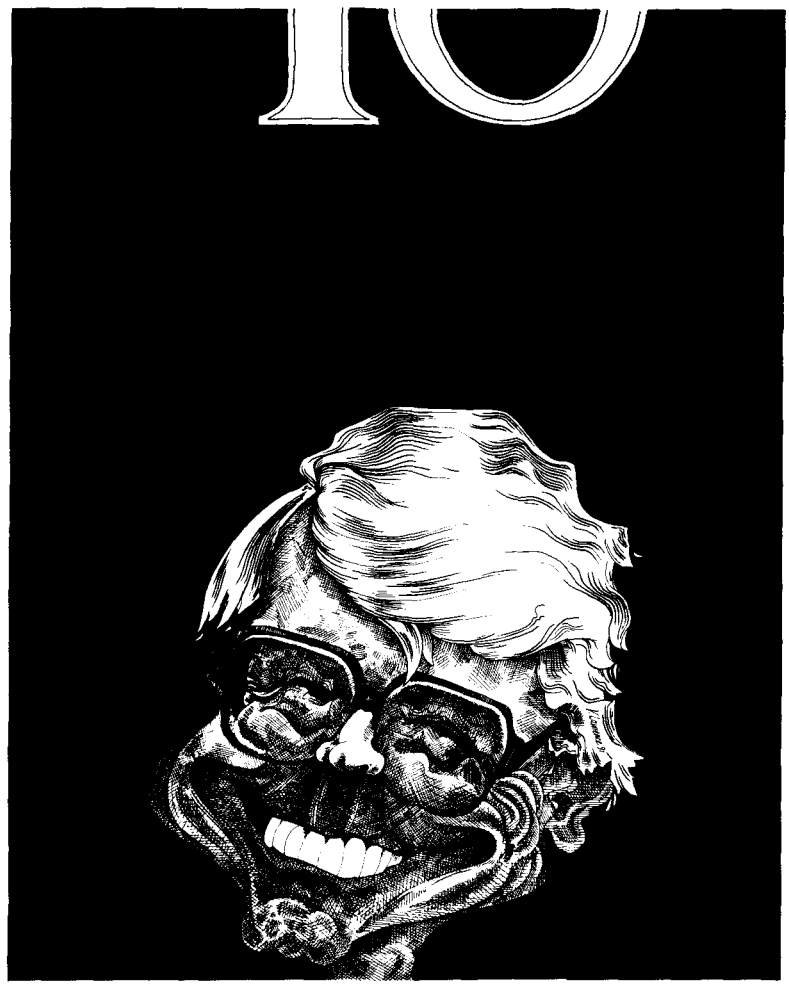
walks. This familiarity with working-class life stayed with Major. While treasury minister in 1987 and still not a famous face, he frequented a workman's café for the breakfast of baked beans on toast that he'd enjoyed as a laborer. His eating habits remain democratic. One of his most ardent fans and steadiest suppliers is the proprietor of the New Delhi Indian Take-out in his parliamentary district of Huntingdon. He also retains a loathing of snobs. He came seething out of an interview granted to Charles Moore, the Etonian deputy editor of the Tory *Daily Telegraph*, who had alluded to how exciting it must be for someone of Major's background to do so well. Major's first words on arriving in No. 10 were to express his hope for a truly "classless" society in Britain. He is all the proof you need that the class bogeys of parents, school, university, regiment, and vowels are altogether vincible.

In the mid-1960s Major got a job in a bank (Standard Charter) and ran for local office in the working-class London neighborhood of Lambeth. As a Tory, he didn't stand much of a chance, but it turned out to be a bad year for the Labour Party, and he won. His first act was to introduce counseling sessions to help citizens get around the bureaucracy and talk with their local representatives (a previously unheard-of innovation). He had exceptionally good relations with inhabitants of public housing, seeing problems from their point of view, rather than from that of the bureaucracy.



JOHN MAJOR BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In 1976 Major applied for the Conservative candidacy in the House of Commons, in a seat he could win—Huntingdon, near Cambridge. His only real obstacle was the local Tory party committee, authorized to pick the candidate. Major faced a faction setting its heart on a sprig of the nobility: the Marquess Douro, eldest son of the Duke of Wellington and a hereditary Grandee (First Class) of Spain. One selection committee member could not bring herself to speak to the other candidate, this little man who worked in a bank and spoke with an unmistakable south London accent. But he was selected nonetheless, charming the majority with his smarts and easygoing personality.

Elected to Parliament in 1979, he soon impressed his colleagues with his skills. He became a Tory whip, whose job is to marshal wayward deputies to vote the party line. The former chief whip, John Wakeham, describes Major as "the best whip I have worked with in twelve years in the office." Major wouldn't merely direct and cajole deputies into voting; he would learn in advance the problems of a piece of legislation, where it might come unstuck, and how it could be exploited by the opposition. A colleague of those days says his judgment in summing up problems and reporting them back to the government was right 95 percent of the time.

Nigel Lawson, former chancellor of the Exchequer, encountered Major as a whip, and picked him as his public-spending czar, the equivalent of director of the Office of Management and Budget. In that job, from 1987 on, Major kept a tight rein on public spending while deflecting political damage. Against Thatcherite orthodoxy, for example, he allowed a real jump in arts spending. It was peanuts compared with Social Security and defense, but it was a shrewd political move. The vocal intelligentsia was made content for almost nothing.

Wakeham points out that where some chief secretaries have made enemies with the brusque ultimatum, "Never mind the reasons, that's all you are going to get," Major took extensive, patient trouble with spending ministers, empathizing with their concerns and justifying every restriction with a softly rational argument. They went away, if not quite happy, then unbruised, and with a more favorable opinion of the chief secretary.

In his dealings with the prime minister, Major benefited from his discretion. Once told that he had never held an unnecessary opinion, he grinned and replied that he had simply never *expressed* one. If Major is tactically supple, he also has political grace. He actually touched the flint-tipped ventricles of Thatcher's affection. It paid off. With her patronage, his ascent was

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swift. From fledgling member of Parliament in 1979 he rose to whip in 1983, junior minister for Social Security in 1985, treasury secretary (and Cabinet member) in 1987, foreign secretary in 1988 (for three months), and chancellor of the Exchequer in the same year, after Lawson's sudden resignation as chancellor threw the Cabinet into chaos. He made friends all along the way. Tom Foley is perhaps a good analogue, but imagine a crisper, more decisive, and arithmetical Foley, who somehow doesn't *look* like a man being consensual.

A kinder, gentler prime minister? Perhaps. For "son of Thatcher" he is light years away from the lady who charged an interviewer who raised issues of compassion with "drooling and driveling." He seems to have some intuitive understanding of human pain, and he has acted on it. One of his first measures in office was to dispense $80 million to compensate hemophiliacs who had contracted AIDS through blood banks in Britain's National Health Service. Thatcher had resisted payment for several years on grounds of frugality.

The tone is different, too. The new Major-appointed chairman of the Conservative Party, Chris Patten, used a telling word to describe the ethos of the new government: "collegiality." Thatcher had no opponents, only enemies; no fellows, only parolees. When someone praised advocates of consensus, she answered, "I look upon such people as traitors and quislings." Her Cabinet toward the end was made up of sycophants, functionaries, and enemies. Major's is made up of colleagues.

But Major is not what Thatcher would call a "wet," a soft-headed liberal Tory. He was, after all, her candidate. Unlike aristocratic Conservatives, Major doesn't feel the need to appease his social conscience by supporting undiscriminating welfarism. His liberalism is of a libertarian variety. He took a strong stand against racism when he was a council member in Lambeth, and recently expelled from the party a man who objected to a black Tory candidate as "a bloody nigger." More radically, he has gone on record as favoring the same age of consent for homosexual and heterosexual sex (in Britain straight sex is legal at 16, and gay sex not until 21). He has also appointed a very able man, Sir George Young, to tackle the growing problem of Britain's homeless. It is hard to imagine Thatcher doing any of these things.

But it isn't hard to imagine Thatcher approving of Major's conservative economics. As Britain now tips into a steep recession, Major hasn't flinched from keeping interest rates at 14 percent, to squeeze inflation. Far from raising taxes, he has called for more tax cuts, especially for the low-paid. The poll tax will be radically revised, but in all likelihood not completely junked. And he remains skeptical of the soundness of rushed plans for a single European currency. The combination of this sort of economics and a liberal social temperament has turned a fifteen-point opinion poll deficit for the Tories into an eleven-point lead. The shrewd bet is that he'll win the next election.

Major is not an angel. He is cool, sometimes a little brutal in his number-crunching. His wise silence over the years has reflected calculation as well as natural restraint. But he is tolerant and humane. There are worse qualities to have in a prime minister. Come to think of it, we've just had eleven years of them.

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The case for empire.

PAX SOVIETICA

By Ronald Steel

It is easy to wax sentimental over the principle of self-determination. The notion that every nationality and ethnic group should have its own independent piece of territory sounds eminently sensible to most Americans. Naturally, we do not apply this hallowed principle to our own land, where scores of ethnic factions struggle for power and influence. The very notion strikes us as laughable, if not subversive. Did we not, in fact, fight a Civil War of unparalleled ferocity and violence more than a hundred years ago to establish the principle that no group of people, however heartfelt their wishes, had the right to leave the American Union? Talk about self-determination to Abraham Lincoln and see how far you get.

Indeed, we do not even like the idea anywhere near our borders. When, for example, in 1967 French president Charles de Gaulle went to Montreal and shouted "*Vive Québec Libre*" to a crowd of impassioned Quebec separatists, American editorialists and politicians treated it as an act of perfidy with sinister anti-American undertones. Were some of our own vociferous ethnic groups to demand the "inalienable" right that we blithely proclaim as hallowed in other people's territories, we might be somewhat less enthusiastic about the principle. There are in this country, after all, black separatists who believe they are entitled to their own nation, not to mention Native Americans whose ancestral lands were stolen from them by the rapacious, Bible-thumping white tribes that virtually annihilated them. If self-determination is such a hallowed belief, we could test our own hypocrisy by starting with the American Indian.

In practice, self-determination, like charity, begins as far away from home as possible. Indeed, its most fervent advocates would confine its purview to lands that currently are, or until recently were, part of the Soviet

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empire, or the Russian empire that preceded it. This is a feasible position. There is nothing inherently illogical about singling out the Soviet leaders, and their imperial Russian forebears, and punishing them for behaving badly during their tenure in power. Victors normally try to punish losers, and in the just-concluded cold war the Soviets are definitely the losers. But we should be clear about what we are doing. Punishment, not principle, is precisely what we are talking about in arguing that the Soviet Union should be broken up into a congeries of mutually antagonistic ethnic entities.

Punishment has been tried before. The most recent attempt was in Central Europe in 1919, when the British and the French—determined both to prevent Germany from ever again challenging their pre-eminence and to persuade their own war-sick peoples that their sacrifices were not in vain—persuaded President Wilson to impose ruinous reparations upon the defeated country, to strip it of its overseas empire, and to redraw its frontiers to deprive it of lands that had long been indisputably German. Although it is arguable that this was justified in the name of the spoils of war, it had little to do with the principle of self-determination, which was sometimes invoked to sanction it. And as the victors soon enough learned, it was also totally self-defeating. The economic ruin of Germany ultimately brought the entire industrialized world to the verge of economic collapse, fed German revanchism, and was in a large way responsible for the destruction of the democratic Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler. The democracies paid heavily for their shortsighted punishment of the German people.

They also paid heavily when they invoked the principle of self-determination elsewhere. The most salient case is the dismemberment of Germany's wartime ally, the Austro-Hungarian empire. It was from the ruins of that empire that the present potpourri of Eastern European states—some of them, like Yugoslavia, already well advanced into the process of disintegration—emerged. The empire, held together loosely from Vienna, comprised a plethora of ethnic and nationality groups, each of them dedicated to the suppression, if not the actual extinction, of whatever other group was its closest neighbor. The empire, however, was exceedingly cosmopolitan, and provided careers (particularly in the army) that were open to peoples of every ethnic group. Vienna dominated and kept order, but the empire itself was multicultural and multilingual. In this respect it was not totally unlike the Soviet Union, or even the Russian empire, where Moscow kept order but young people from every part of the empire could rise to positions of power.

Of course, the Austro-Hungarian empire was split apart by the Treaty of Versailles and a host of nation-states created, each of them presumably corresponding to the placement of the ethnic tribes that inhabited them. If these tribes had had the good grace to coalesce into neatly defined areas, the task of drawing frontiers might have been relatively uncomplicated. But such borders did not previously exist, and ethnic groups spilled messily along trade and migratory routes into one another's "territories." However, they wanted to be independent, and so borders were drawn and countries created. The result was that millions of people live in territories that are not ethnically "theirs"—Hungarians in Romania, Romanians in Russian, Germans in Czechoslovakia, etc. This condition, as we know, has persisted until this day. Now that the Eastern European states have chased out the Soviets and regained their "national identities," they are busy suppressing "foreign" ethnic groups within their midst. It is now becoming distressingly likely that the future of Eastern Europe may be its past.

Interestingly, it was not the original intention of Wilson to dismantle the Austro-Hungarian empire. He feared precisely what occurred. In his Fourteen Points address of January 1918 he supported internal autonomy within the empire for nationalist groups like the Serbs and Czechs, but issued to Vienna "assurances that no dismemberment of the empire is intended." He was driven from this position by pressure from émigré groups, by the British and French, who sought political influence in the region, and as an expedient of war to promote rebellion within the enemy empire. In retrospect it is clear that the destruction of the empire contributed significantly to the collapse of the political balance in Central Europe, to Nazi Germany's domination of the area, and to the Second World War. Ironically, some of the constituent parts of the old empire—Austria, Serbia, Hungary, the Venezia-Guilia region of Italy—are now trying to form a regional association, like detached parts of an organism that seek to reconnect themselves.

This is not to say that it is always a bad thing to break up an empire, but rather that we should be clear about our reasons for proposing it. Punishment is one reason. It is certainly arguable that the dismemberment of the Soviet Union is a fitting penance for the miseries that Communist leaders have inflicted on the peoples under their control. It is also arguable that the world might be a better place if scores of contentious nation-states struggled against one another for influence and power within the territory that was once part of the Soviet Union. International anarchy is an arguable, if not necessarily intellectually coherent, position. One could conceivably maintain that, for example, an independent Armenia and an independent Azerbaijan, each dedicated to the total extinction of the other, is all for the good because the rulers in the Kremlin have been so bad. That it may not be very good for the peoples of those "countries," particularly for the Armenians who not long ago had to appeal to Moscow to send troops to save them from rampaging Azeris, may nonetheless be worth taking into consideration.

Self-determination, however, is clearly flawed as a principle for action. Its central premise is that peoples

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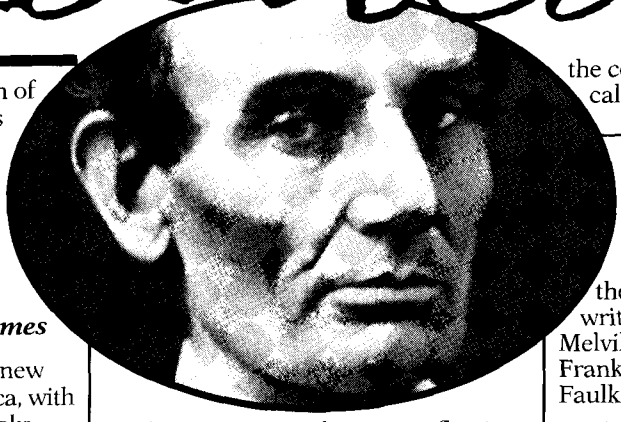
Lincoln.



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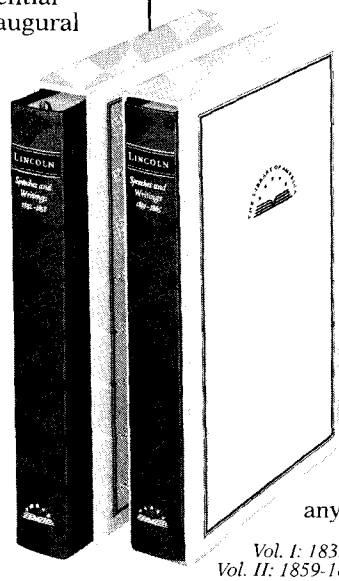

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of different faiths and ethnic compositions cannot live together in harmony. It is a principle based on tribal loyalties, suppression of internal differences, and intolerance. It is atavistic, reactionary, and prone to violence. As a principle it has been used to promote the destruction of existing states, as by Hitler in his claims upon Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Russia. It is, as Walter Lippmann wrote nearly fifty years ago, "a license to intervention and aggression," inviting majorities to be intransigent, and leads to the atomization of human societies. It is also a contradiction of the very principles on which the United States was founded and has prospered. It is an uncivilized and, in a profound sense, an un-American doctrine.

Why, then, do we (sometimes) promote it abroad? Why, for that matter, are we so inconsistent about it, espousing it sometimes as a sacred principle and other times, as in the case of Quebec, Biafra, or the Basque lands, as a heresy? The answer lies somewhere between sentimentality and intellectual sloppiness. We vaguely link the aspirations of various ethnic groups to our own war for independence, ignoring that ours was an anti-colonial, not an ethnic, struggle. We think that ethnicity is good, for we are a multiethnic society, forgetting that the very basis of our commonwealth is that peoples of different religions, races, and national origins can live together harmoniously under a common flag, sharing common loyalties.

So the real question is: Do we seriously want to see the dismemberment of the Soviet Union? Is it in our own interests if this happens? Will the world be a more stable and better place? Will the peoples within that vast territory be more secure or more prosperous? One should not embark lightly on the dismemberment of a great state. However annoying it may be as a single unit, it could be infinitely more troublesome when split asunder, ineluctably drawing neighboring countries into its quarrels. Again, Austria-Hungary provides an example, as for that matter does the Ottoman Empire. If Moscow does not impose some kind of order on the contentious and often murderously intolerant peoples who live between the frontier of Europe and the vast stretches of Asia, who will? Will we? Will the European Community? Will the United Nations? The current troubles in the Persian Gulf do not provide an inspiring example of what happens in areas where the anarchy we call self-determination holds sway. ●

The case for Soviet disintegration.

SPRINGTIME OF NATIONS

By Hélène Carrère D'Encausse

At the beginning of the 1990s, Lenin's urgent question "Who will prevail over whom?" has found its answer in the USSR and in the Europe it dominated for half a century. Nationalism has prevailed. It has consigned communism into the archive of dead utopias.

This sudden defeat of communism, bludgeoned by the blows of nationalities determined to decide their own fate, is being played out above all within the Soviet Union itself. This has more than a touch of irony: communism came out of Russia and was imposed on the Russian exterior, and then Europe, by Russia's successor, the USSR. It proclaimed the solidarity of peoples, but they responded by turning against the system in order to realize themselves. The challenge to Communist imperialism, begun by Gorbachev, reached the center of Europe and then returned, boomerang fashion, right back to Russia itself. The process was one of cumulative, accelerating decomposition. To invert an old English proverb, nothing fails like failure. The collapse of communism is its perfect illustration.

But what next? Does the implosion of the Soviet empire mean its place will be filled by a multitude of nation-states, each forging its own destiny? At this point in history every nation, or almost every nation, seems to be thinking of a divorce, unable to imagine a compromise that would allow some newly conceived common bond. But the present intransigence cannot disguise the constraints of geography and history. The territorial continuity of the Russian, and then Soviet, empire has favored the coexistence of different peoples, and the interpenetration of their political and material cultures.

An empire that emancipates overseas possessions can withdraw its civil servants and its colonists. Despite certain material difficulties, the USSR can withdraw its resident troops and advisers from Eastern and Central Eu-

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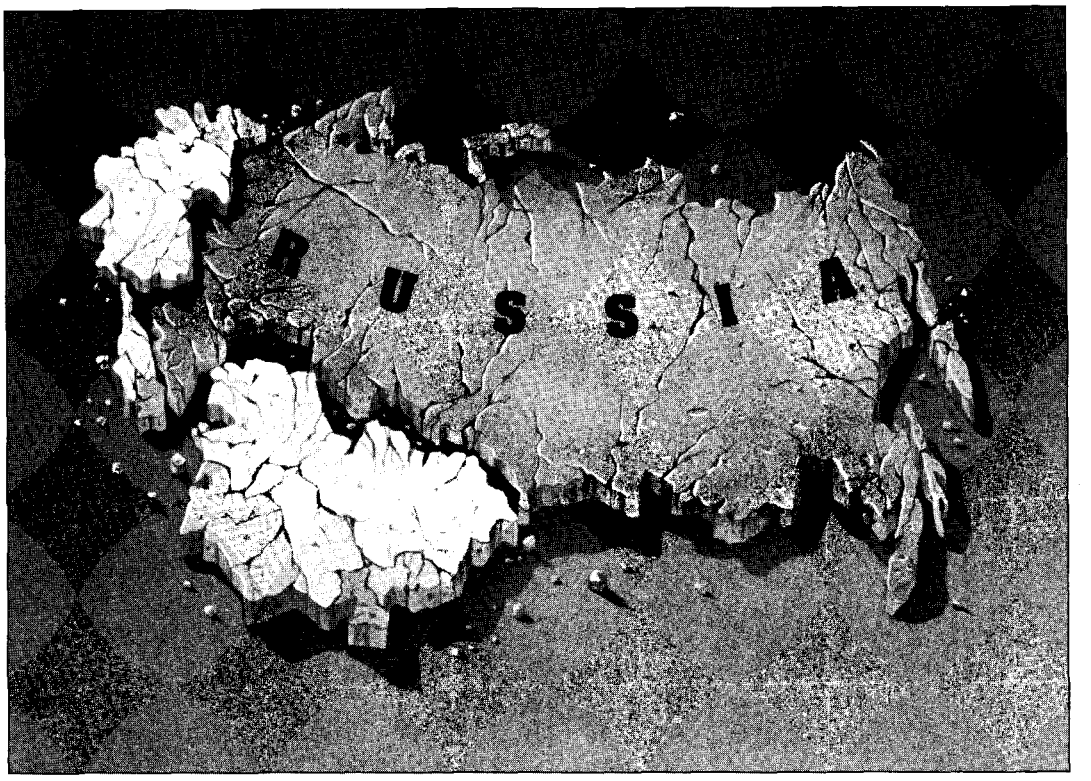
rope—indeed, eventually break all ties with its former allies. But it can only do so once the borders between itself and these states are settled. With the Soviet nation-states, the borders are precisely the problem. What *are* the frontiers of each Soviet republic, or, for that matter, of Russia? History has so often displaced these borders—indeed, displaced entire populations—that to demarcate the territory of each nation-state is no easy task. Where, for example, is the actual frontier between Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan? And the border between the Ukraine and a Tatar country claimed by those exiled under Stalin? Where is the boundary separating Lithuania, which looks toward Scandinavia, and Slavic Byelorussia? There is no end to the list of imprecise areas that are grounds for dispute among the renascent nations.



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Economics is equally important. To be sure, with time the bonds of interdependence Moscow has imposed on the periphery—economic specialization, overlapping lines of communication, etc.—can be stretched to the breaking point. But once independence is achieved, each nation needs to ensure its survival, and it cannot do so by suddenly isolating itself from the whole on which it depends. Lithuania proved this to be the case when it was subjected to a crippling embargo, which, after all, was far from total.

There are only two solutions to this mess: forced displacements of populations and frontiers, or compromise. The first solution is generally a bloody one, usually imposed by war. Consider Poland. Today it is a model of national cohesion. But until 1939 it was a closed field of national conflicts in which Jews, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians complained bitterly of being reduced to second-class citizens. The problem was resolved, if one may so put it, only by the German genocide and Stalin's annexation of the western Ukraine. But who would suggest such drastic measures within the present boundaries of the Soviet Union?

What's left is compromise, which would allow different communities to live side by side, often in multiethnic states. It is clear that if they want to develop any equilibrium between communities, the nation-states have everything to gain by forming larger aggregates, in which particular conflicts would carry less weight. This explains why national fronts and political parties have included in their programs frameworks for mitigating independence.

But most of these frameworks are fraught with difficulties. One obvious possible regrouping is an alliance of equals among the three Slavic states at the core of the old USSR: Russia, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine. Many Russians are thinking of this. The Ukrainian Rukh is not entirely hostile to it. Nor is the Byelorussian Popular Front. It would comprise more than 220 million people, vast territory, and resources guaranteeing future prosperity. But once again boundaries get in the way. Where, for example, would the borders of Russia be? Would they extend only to the Urals? Most of the Russian groups would demand that they reach the Pacific and probably incorporate all of northern Kazakhstan, which is populated by Russians and possesses a rich subsoil. The chance of breakdown in negotiating these demands with the other nationalities is high.

Other feasible transnational arrangements are equally problematic. Imagine, for example, a collection of Muslim states with Uzbekistan in the lead, at the frontiers of an expanded Russia or of a pan-Slavic confederation. Imagine, even, one unified Muslim state. At the Central Asian periphery, nascent political parties advance such hypotheses.

Now imagine the complications. In Russia the idea of a neighboring Muslim state with a fast-growing population would only inspire fear. Muscovites, especially those who already daily deplore the "cost" of that Muslim periphery, would be far happier to let it splinter and go its own way than attempt to unite it, and possi-

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bly provoke even more belligerence. And besides, the resentments in Central Asia against Russia run too deep for easy compromise. The USSR has systematically ruined Central Asia by economic overspecialization, has deprived it of the means of further development, and thus has condemned it to backwardness. There is also the problem of the Caucasus states. Should Russia deliver Christian Georgia and Armenia to an unpredictable future surrounded by Muslims?

The USSR, or what remains of it, is thus faced with a serious dilemma. There is an obvious need to put an end to the empire, to establish its de facto dismemberment in a new political framework, to allow free peoples to choose their destiny. No one in Moscow is now able to rebuff the nations that demand the right to self-determination and separation. At the same time, if Russia, as heir to the USSR, wants to avoid innumerable tragedies, it must imagine common solutions based on a new equality with those nations that have shared its destiny. And those common solutions are fraught with the seemingly insuperable obstacles of geography, history, culture, religion, economics. In the present climate of mutual suspicion and chaos, it is hard to see how they can be overcome.

We are, then, at a critical moment in history. The period of the Russian empire built on a common ideology—monarchical, Christian Russia, or totalitarian, Marxist communism—is over. The USSR was the last empire of this type, which gave it considerable force but also condemned it to turn its back on true modernization. Once the empire has gone, it is up to each of the nations to determine how best to attempt this currently elusive modernization.

Clearly its framework will be the nation-state, most likely alone, less likely in a variety of configurations. In this distant part of Europe, nationalism is all the stronger for being so long delayed. The end of the czarist empire promised a dawn of nations, only to be followed by a new night of Communist ideology. The real revolution, postponed for seventy years, is now here. Old conflicts will likely find new, shocking life. Unresolved contentions—territorial claims, oppression, intense national rivalries—will revive. The animosities are bad enough in Eastern Europe, where many of the old demons are once again on the rise. The nation-states emerging from the ashes of the USSR will likely be far more volatile.

Is this to be deplored? Is nationalism a sad development in the present history of formerly Communist Eurasia? Would the more desirable change have been a direct march strictly toward democracy?

More to the point, are nationalism and democracy mutually exclusive? This last question, based on the experience of already advanced democratic nations, rests on forgetting an important fact. The nation inscribed in a state is a decisive stage in the process of the modernization of societies. The nation in Europe, even in Eastern Europe, is not tribal; the passionate desire to consolidate the nation within the framework of the state does not imply any slippage toward tribalism. The attachment to the nation, to the larger community, cemented by territorial proximity and a common past, endowed with accepted structures, is the accomplishment of civilized man. It is an advancement over primitive society, not a regression toward it.

The nation builds itself on a common memory. It is natural that in reconnecting with this long-forbidden memory, the people in the throes of liberation also find traces of conflicts and resentments that have set it against other peoples. To recover the memory, to clear the paths to national cohesion, is not a simple step, and it is not exempt from suffering. In this difficult process of finding the nation again, tensions that have been masked can only resurface. This is a regrettable but inevitable aspect of the renaissance of peoples and the discovery of their identity. Their nationalism may be too often aggressive and vindictive, but this is because it is the fruit of a long period of oppression, humiliation, indeed, suppression of the nation.

A peaceful, open nationalism comes only later, when certainty that the nation can flourish has been guaranteed by time. If we forget this and imagine that these peoples, experiencing a rebirth of their own life, might become modernized and thus accede to democracy while bypassing the nation and its consolidation around powerful national feeling, we are once again reasoning like Lenin, thinking that in the name of a simple postulate we can dispense with certain stages of social development. No one actually in the USSR thinks this way, except those few who still cling to Leninism. Nationalism is the matrix organizing the reflections and projects of all those with political responsibility.

The recourse to crackdown is made problematic by the ethnic tensions within the Soviet army itself; by the universal opposition such central violence would provoke; by the fear among the military that they would be engaging in a battle they could not hope to win. And the KGB does not seem disposed to attempt what a demoralized army, profoundly infected by the virus of national rivalries, cannot and no longer wants to do. It is therefore unlikely that force will be used to stem the irresistible tide of nations toward their chosen destiny.

The situation of the USSR in 1990 is not without resemblance to the plight of Russia in the spring of 1917. At both historical moments the power of the state is still nearly intact, yet it seems paralyzed in the face of forces that challenge and threaten to annihilate it. But in 1917 a society and nations in the grip of war, unaware of the ways and means of totalitarianism, allowed their revolution to be appropriated by the Bolsheviks, and did not know how to resist the imposition of absolute domination. At the end of this century the peoples of the USSR have the tragic knowledge of their experience of totalitarianism, and those who are leading the national struggle—in Russia or at the periphery—know all too well where the underlying sources of oppression really are. Nationalism is not one of them. ●

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The total collapse of the USSR.

THE END

By Gabriel Schoenfeld

If the recent, chaotic Congress of People's Deputies taught us anything, it is that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is no more. To paraphrase what Voltaire once said about the Holy Roman Empire, it is no longer a Union, no longer Soviet, and no longer Socialist. Only the republics remain, but some are nascent states and others are in danger of splintering themselves. Whatever happens now—crackdown, chaos, even Gorbachevite success—there is a sense that a Rubicon has been crossed. The USSR is over.

The collapse of socialism began a process that is still unfolding. Although the Congress of People's Deputies recently voted to keep the word "Socialist" in the USSR's name, the doctrine has already been destroyed. In the beginning there was an attempt at mere revisionism. As with Nikita Khrushchev's earlier de-Stalinization effort, Mikhail Gorbachev's exposé of his predecessors' rule was part of a campaign to return to Leninist norms. But rather than checking dissolution, the new, more honest, history galvanized it. With archives opened and censors laid off, officially sanctioned subversion irreversibly took hold. Honest Communist faithful are now unable to explain what their Party has done. "We are tortured by confusion," admitted Aleksandr Yakovlev, Gorbachev's radical confidante, "about how the country and the Leninist Party could have accepted the dictatorship of mediocrity and tolerated the Stalin years and rivers of blood."

Technology delivered another blow. Under Leonid Brezhnev, Soviet science could claim real achievements. The USSR had an extensive space program and a weapons research and development base with a formidable reputation. Serious trouble appeared in 1982. In a massive air battle over Lebanon, Israel used electronic countermeasures to foil Soviet-made anti-aircraft missiles and downed ninety-two Syrian-piloted MiGs with only one loss of its own. The drubbing taught Red Army generals a lesson about the quality of Soviet military output. The worries continue. Today the military harbor severe doubts about the technological proficiency of their entire operation.

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In the civilian sector came Chernobyl. In 1984, two years before radioactive debris spread across the face of Europe and the USSR, a Tass correspondent wrote of the Soviet nuclear industry: "A high level of reliability is ensured by perfect Soviet systems." In the spring of 1986, for ten days after the accident, the Kremlin pretended there had been no disaster; in Kiev the May Day parade was televised nationwide. Then Moscow began to beg for help from the rest of the world.

Today, with socialist politics and science exposed, Gorbachev and the men around him suffer from more than mere policy differences. They have been plunged into an intellectual vacuum. The "socialist market" about which Gorbachev talks borrows equally from Milton Friedman and John Kenneth Galbraith, Friedrich Hayek and Karl Marx. Gorbachev says he supports the market, yet cannot accept private property. He wants to preserve the collective spirit of Soviet socialism, cultivate American individualism, establish German labor discipline, achieve Japanese growth rates, and enjoy the Swedish welfare state. If he could achieve one of these, it would be a miracle. By lifting the pall of repression and fear, Gorbachev dried up the fuel that the old system ran on. His tinkering with the economy replaced torpor with scarcity and chaos.

Above all, the union is no more. The successful technique of the Stalinist-Brezhnevite system of rule was to deny any chance of independent political, social, and economic organization in the republics and everywhere. Although breathing life into local and informal organizations was one of the goals of Gorbachev's reforms, this rapidly took on a life of its own.

After maintaining for seven decades that the problem of multinationalism had been "solved," the Kremlin finally admitted that its interethnic fraternity of brotherly love was based upon terror and lies. But the very process of attempting to account honestly for what Moscow now describes in official publications as "Stalinist ethnocide" involved unraveling the various myths that bound together the USSR. Moscow found that instead of dampening secessionist pressures in the Baltic states, knowledge of history served merely to inflame them further. In effect, the Kremlin has confessed to raping and then forcibly marrying Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. But now, four decades later, it says the

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statute of limitations for this crime has expired and it has scruples about annulment and divorce. As with Stalin's other evil deeds, no one has been punished. "Excesses" were committed, as Soviet officials put it. "Deformations of socialism" are blamed.

What happened in the Baltic states is now repeating itself nationwide. Gorbachev has been casting about for a new formula to replace the 1922 union treaty that binds the republics together. But with his admission that the old agreement is a fraud, the entire federation is falling apart. Not only are all of the republics pulling away from Moscow; those that are ethnically heterogeneous are fracturing. The Gagauz rebellion against the Moldavians and the Ossetians' battle with the Georgians are only the most recent manifestations.

In the Caucasus and portions of Central Asia the disorder has already entered a Lebanon-like phase (although Soviet commentators tend to prefer an analogy to the West Bank). In Armenia there are approximately seventy parties and movements, and "practically all of them have their own armed formations," reports one Soviet newspaper. Ambushes and bomb attacks on trains and buses are daily fare in the struggle between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. In one recent attack Armenian guerrillas armed with grenades, explosives, and other firearms blocked and then opened fire on a sixteen-vehicle "convoy" that was accompanied by five busloads of internal troops. Three people were killed and twenty-four injured.

According to *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, in the Kirghiz district of Osh in Central Asia, "small mobile detachments inflicted mass terror on virtually the entire border territory of Osh district." The city of Osh was paralyzed when a group of militants attacked workers' and students' dormitories and set fire to buildings. The ethnic violence has already created 600,000 refugees in Central Russia, who fled from the Soviet south. *Pravda* says they represent "flammable material for new, even more powerful explosions of ethnic discord."

Fragmentation is under way even in the Russian republic. Since the summer, "autonomous" territorial subunits of Russia have been rushing to declare sovereignty and announce control of their own resources. The Tatars have proclaimed the creation of Tatarstan. The Mari territory has become the Republic of Mariel. Bashkirya is Bashkortostan. The Chuvash say they live in the Republic of Chuvashen. Some of the new entities are independence-minded, but not terribly progressive; the Buryat, Kalmyk, and Komi territories all insist upon the designation of "Socialist Republic." Even the Eskimos want out of Russia; in the frigid north there is now the Chukchi Soviet Autonomous Republic. All of this has happened against Gorbachev's will, but he maintains that Moscow is still in charge.

Although Eduard Shevardnadze seems to believe a crackdown is imminent, it is an open question whether the Kremlin has the will or the muscle to restore tranquility to the realm. Over the past several months Gorbachev has assumed a tough front, accumulating one set of emergency powers after another. Declarations of independence and sovereignty are null and void, the Kremlin has declared. "Control committees" staffed by thugs from "the working class" have been set loose to supervise food distribution. The military enjoys greater discretion to shoot (but only, it is said, in self-defense). The hard-nosed Boris Pugo has been put in command of the Interior Ministry, and the Bonaparte of the Afghan campaign, General Boris Gromov, is Pugo's deputy.

But there is an element of bluff here. The instruments of coercion that were once the pride of Soviet totalitarianism are themselves divided and faltering. The former interior minister, Vadim Bakatin, says that the militia—the Soviet local police—is infected with "primeval nationalism." In Kirghizia, as in other republics, there is bickering between the largely Slavic army and the locally staffed militia. "Workers in the law-enforcement agencies are engaged in discrediting the actions of the army," says Lieutenant General G. Kondratyev, a local military commander. In Osh blood was shed after false word spread that soldiers had killed a local man. "Unfortunately," says Kondratyev, "the rumors, I repeat, are being spread by the militia."

A hostile atmosphere has enveloped those in uniform. General Mikhail Moiseyev, the Soviet chief of staff, warns that there is "a negative attitude toward servicemen of the army and fleet. . . . Instances of hooliganism toward officers and army warrant officers have also grown more frequent in the streets of Moscow and Leningrad." With the prestige of the military falling to ever new lows, there is what Moscow Radio calls "mass disregard" of the law on universal military service. In Georgia, according to the chief military recruiter for the Georgian Republic, there are 10,000 deserters. In Lvov oblast, Moscow Radio tells us, "a particularly difficult situation" has arisen: not a single recruit showed up after the latest annual call-up.

Although Russian troops have been used to extinguish brushfires in the outlying republics, this type of internal mission is unpopular among the soldiers and their families, as was shown in last year's winter war in Azerbaijan. "I will not give my son to the Soviet army," said one of many Russian mothers demonstrating in Gorbachev's home base of Stavropol after her son was called up to participate in the January 1990 Azerbaijan campaign. "We keep on enduring, enduring, enduring. How long must we endure?"

Maintaining domestic order is taking a toll on morale. Colonel General Yuri Shatalin is the chief of the Interior Ministry's internal troops. He confesses that neither he nor his men were "psychologically prepared" for outbreaks of ethnic violence. "I had experience in Afghanistan behind me too," he says. "Then suddenly there were smoking ruins in Fergana and brutes in Abkhaziya." The shell-shocked forces of order are ill-equipped. They don't even have handcuffs, because the workers at the handcuff factory ceased production out of "moral considerations." Sheepskin coats are also in short supply because two Kazakh meat-

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packing factories refused to make their delivery of skins. V. Yakubovsky, an Interior Ministry supply official, complained in a government newspaper, *Pravitelsvennyy Vestnik*, in January 1990, "Perhaps they believe that a sentry . . . can stand guard in bitter cold in a coat lined with cheap artificial lining."

Even the KGB, the Communist Party's stiletto, is showing signs of rust. The security agency has been publicly preening itself and sanitizing its image. KGB security agents, noted Tass on December 14, are now concentrating their efforts on exposing, among other things, "abuses in storing, transporting, and distributing foodstuffs." In this new role they have already had heroic successes; in December a squad of crack KGB agents foiled the illegal export of 150 tons of scarce powdered milk. But whatever its virtues in managing the food business, thus far the KGB has not distinguished itself in forecasting, let alone extinguishing, ethnic unrest. Moreover it has been stung by a string of internal defectors, who, like the now immensely popular General Oleg Kalugin, are telling the public outrageous but plausible tales about their former employer.

Housing for security personnel is abysmal. Even in the elite KGB central apparatus, one in fifteen staffers is without housing. But fringe benefits in the Interior Ministry are worse. Former Interior Minister Bakatin was fielding questions on a radio talk show when a weeping Tatyana Gordenko, the wife of an Interior Ministry troops warrant officer, telephoned in. To a tale of woe about her family's ten-square-meter apartment, Bakatin replied: "Don't worry, Tatyana Viktorovna, don't cry. I will give instructions for an investigation and for you to be helped, if everything is as you say. For God's sake, don't cry. Give me your address."

As the possibility of a crackdown emerges, the question before the Kremlin is the same as in February 1917: Will the cossacks obey an order to fire on the crowd? Even if the answer is yes, the second question is more pertinent: What then? There is no longer something called communism to justify spilling new rivers of blood. Russian nationalism in both its benign and malignant varieties is one potential substitute ideology, but it has little appeal in the sizable non-Russian areas where competing nationalisms flourish. The best that imperial-minded Russians can hope for is a pan-Slavic confederation of nations, but given the embarrassment of socialism, it will approximate the Solzhenitsyn rather than the Soviet variety. Either way, the twelve non-Slavic republics would not be willing members of this particular club.

The cause of "order" alone is a weak one. As General Wojciech Jaruzelski learned when he declared martial law in Poland in 1981 without a semblance of a political program, the use of raw power for a holding action cannot long succeed. Senior military and KGB men loathe disorder, but apart from stamping out what they call sabotage, when it comes to running an industrial economy they do not have a clue. The Gorbachev reforms happened because the elite recognized the bankruptcy of the status quo. If Gorbachev—or even a conservative successor—tries to return to old means and ways, that bankruptcy will still remain. Indeed, it will be all the more evident.

Soviet power has collapsed externally as well as internally. Under the old guard Moscow explained away domestic shortcomings by pointing to the sacrifices needed to fend off the imperialist threat. The growing collection of replica states from Afghanistan to Angola was presented as evidence that the USSR's superior social system would triumph in the end. But then fraternal Eastern European Communist states followed Moscow's instructions to call elections and open up their walls. Just as in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev optimistically believed that communism in Eastern Europe could be reinvigorated by a bath of reforms. As each Communist Party walked this plank and then plunged off, Moscow was obliged to hail as a victory each successive defeat—or go to war.

By choosing retrenchment, what might be called a McGovernite Soviet foreign policy was born. "The main threats to the security of our society now emanate not from outside, but from within," wrote Andrei Kortunov and Alexei Izyumov, foreign policy analysts from the USA and Canada Institute, in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, "and are connected (in diminishing order of importance) with economic collapse, the nationality crisis, the deterioration in the environment, and the growth of crime."

With this "blame Russia first" ideology, fears of capitalist encirclement are gone. If anything, the Kremlin now maintains that, under the old regime, there was too *little* capitalist encirclement. For economic survival and political legitimacy, Moscow now aims to surround the USSR with a ring of capitalist powers that are willing to rescue it from the rubble of its own collapse. Although everyone in Soviet politics—left, center, and especially right—grumbles about the humiliation, economic dependence is a fact. Tin cup in hand, Moscow is eager to become an ally of the United States even as it insists on modernizing its intercontinental SS-18s. In Europe the USSR has become a panhandler begging menacingly for cash. If you don't spare a nickel, slightly shabby Soviet ambassadors are saying on elegant Parisian streets, we will unleash a flood of refugees and other plagues.

Before Mikhail Gorbachev, communism's greatest wrecker, arrived on the scene, no Western observers were able to forecast either the scope or the pace of the transformation of the USSR. Nearly six years later, an era has clearly come to an end. "All ethical, political, and ideological principles have collapsed," says the Soviet sociologist Yuri Levada. "Russia is now a kind of 'wasteland' in which the criteria on which all societies are based and controlled have entirely disappeared." Whatever happens now—whether the disintegration spins relentlessly out of control, whether Moscow attempts to restore order, whether Gorbachev survives or falls—we are in a new world. We can only stand now and watch. ●

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Blood and Thunder

Lately I saw tapes of the first two *Godfather* films to refresh myself before seeing **The Godfather: Part III** (Paramount). The faults are still worrisome. The editing leaves fissures. The screenplays don't always make sense. Why do so many loud-mouthed antagonists defy the family without learning from previous examples? Why don't they know they're going to be killed? How could the mass murders at the end of *Part I* settle anything? How could they be anything but a declaration of war? Al Pacino is still hard to credit as Brando's heir; he looks as if Brando could have him for breakfast. Brando's performance itself is still questionable; among other things, his accent keeps slipping. (He did much better in *The Freshman,* playing off his previous performance.) And we can only be grateful that Diane Keaton is not on screen any more than she is.

Yet the films have qualities that distinguish them from most Mafia films before and since. First is their size. The director and co-writer, Francis Ford Coppola, knew that sheer dimension would give the films a greater gravity than any one or two story strands could produce. Then there's the historical perspective, the sense that we are seeing the continuum of Sicilian life in another setting. This historicity—created by more than Michael's visit to Sicily in *Part I*—provides a rationale that few other Mafia films convey.

Possibly most important is Gordon Willis's cinematography. Imagine any one scene of those films—same script, same actors—in cruder light with less evocative shadowings, and the whole enterprise is nakedly disclosed as just a gangster picture, only longer. Willis's gold and his different shades of black make it all look serious. *Part III,* equally long, is equally uplifted by Willis's camera. It's as if the Corleone family had engaged a master painter to do portraits of these racketeers, drug peddlers, and murderers, and by his art had aggrandized these people of the moral gutter.

Once again the screenplay is by Coppola and Mario Puzo. Once again the structure suggests an opera libretto, with big set pieces—arias, duets, trios, etc.—connected by lesser narrative. Appropriately, then, the last sequence takes place in an opera house—in Palermo, where Michael's son is making his debut in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (which itself is set in Sicily). There's no need to detail all that leads up to this finale. I'll just note that the film begins in 1979, when Michael is in his 60s and is being invested with a papal order in New York. At the celebration that follows (reminiscent of the wedding party at the start of *Part I*), Michael presents a $500 million check for aid to Sicily. This is the sort of touch that gives *The Godfather* mythic power with critics. What critic would be impressed with $500 thousand?

Again, some points in the screenplay are puzzling. In *Part I* Franco Citti was a Sicilian bodyguard whom we last saw fleeing from the booby-trapped car that killed Michael's bride. Obviously Citti was in on the plot. How come he is now a trusted aide? Further: Is history being revised here? The plot involves a Vatican bank and the murder of Pope John Paul. What do Coppola and Puzo know that we don't know? (And what greater eminence in the world—or out of it—will they find to murder in *Part IV*?)

A skilled Sicilian killer is hired for a big hit in the last sequence, a man famed for his subtlety of assassination. His plan for the hit seems shabby; and when it fails, his desperate substitute is downright stupid. How could he possibly have escaped?

Coppola has made a major mistake in casting. (Outside of Diane Keaton, who was, I suppose, a given.) He has put his daughter, Sofia, in the role of Michael's daughter. She is not an actress of professional caliber, and she shows little hint of becoming one. In her key moment in the last sequence, at the screening I attended, she got the wrong reaction from the audience.

Al Pacino of course plays Michael and plays him somewhat overly stoop-shouldered and antique for a man in his early 60s. This approach doesn't lend much authority to a performance that was never authoritative enough. To beef up his part, the authors give him a few touches of diabetic shock, as a kind of actor's cadenza.

Coppola's sister, Talia Shire, is again Michael's sister. Shire has matured in the years since *Part II,* which helps. Eli Wallach putters around as a deceptively decrepit capo. Joe Mantegna is good

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Awakenings. *Adapted—with some Hollywood improvements—from Oliver Sacks's book. Yet this drama of post-encephalitic patients, with Robin Williams as the doctor and Robert De Niro as the central case, is powerful and poignant. (Reviewed 1/7&14/91)* **Dances with Wolves.** *A Union Army officer, posted to the frontier, discovers Western space and Indian life. Kevin Costner stars and makes a noteworthy directing debut with this overlong but gorgeous saga. (12/10/90)* **Mr. and Mrs. Bridge.** *A conflation of Evan S. Connell's two novels about the Bridges, done with considerable appreciation of tone. Joanne Woodward is adequate as India; Paul Newman is not quite sufficiently finished as Walter. (12/24/90)* **Tilaï.** *In remote Burkina Faso, an almost Greek drama of broken promises and blood. Idrissa Ouedraogo, who made* Yaaba, *wrote and directed with genuine talent. (12/17/90)* **—SK**

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enough as an obstreperous rival of the Corleone clan, though—once again—how does he expect to survive? Donal Donnelly is mouselike as a scheming archbishop. Raf Vallone (a pleasure to see him again) gives plentiful solidity to the cardinal who becomes pope.

The chief supporting player, who is really more than that, is Andy Garcia as Michael's nephew. Clearly this young man is going to be Michael's successor. Garcia, who first became noticeable in *The Untouchables*, has seductive strength, homicidal cool. One reason to look forward to *Part IV* is that he'll fill the center better than Pacino does.

Coppola directs with vigor, skill, and, I'd say, relief. After the troubles he has had since *Part II*, with unworthy screenplays that wasted his talent, he seems to slip back into another *Godfather* film with a happy sigh. He's like an actor resuming a role in a previous success after some misadventures. Coppola's relish is manifest.

Sometimes his touch is heavy. For instance, a mob hit is planned in a chapel with a huge crucified Christ in the background. On the other hand, one of the hit plannings (there are many) is especially clever: in a kitchen with a TV newscaster talking about the reason for the hit while a thunderstorm roars outside. (Was Coppola remembering the kitchen-and-thunder scene in *The Magnificent Ambersons*?)

Part of the success of the first two *Godfather* films was presumably due to the usual vicarious thrill of *GoodFellas* and other Mafia pictures: we move into a criminal society and live by its brutal, greedy standards for a couple of hours. *Part III* supplies the same thrill, plus the unique quality of this series: we join a family so rich that they have acquired the dignity that riches bring in our world, whatever their source.

Ultimately, the *Godfather* success may rest on the fact that, structurally, these films are old-fashioned. The nineteenth-century opera libretto, as noted, is a possible paradigm. Martin Scorsese wanted *GoodFellas* to hurtle along, with present-day pace and pulse. Coppola wants to *enjoy* his story more, without slack but without hurry. This paradoxical combination, of venerable method and contemporary material, may be the base of the *Godfather* appeal.

Thank-you Note. Few fancy film journals will mourn Martin Ritt, the director who died last month at 76. He was never a self-conscious stylist. Worse (to the aesthetes), he was, as *The New York Times* obituary said, a "maker of socially conscious films." Yes, he was—*The Front*, *The Molly Maguires*, and *Norma Rae* prominent among them. But he made other kinds of films as well. Pictures that luxuriated in character, like *The Long Hot Summer* and *Hud*. Non-syrupy films of feeling, like *Pete 'n' Tillie* and *Conrack*. A Mafia film, *The Brotherhood*, that anteceded *The Godfather* in more than date. Everything he made, including his clinkers, was done with great understanding of actors and with the camera as their friend.

He also made the best film version of a le Carré novel. (Yes, I've seen *The Russia House*.) If you want to see an exceptionally fine film this evening, rent the tape of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. ●

Robert Brustein on Theater

Tripping into the Abyss

King Lear is a great mountain of a play, and anyone who attempts to scale it deserves high marks for intrepidity. Hal Holbrook did not reach the peak in Gerald Freedman's production at the Roundabout Theatre, but he put a few pitons in the rocks; watching his three-hour-and-fifteen-minute ascent was an engaging, if not always an involving, experience. Holbrook came onstage looking like Lionel Barrymore as Doctor Gillespie. His head and face wreathed in white hairs, his body smothered in furs, he railed at Kent as if he had just caught Doctor Kildare in an act of malpractice. (I half-expected to see his thumbs stuck in his vest.)

Holbrook is a contemporary actor with a drawling delivery and a rather limited range. Lacking the high vocal levels that provide emotional variety, he chose to travel a plateau, perilously close to rant, throughout most of the play's length. Still, he had the courage to go for the size of the character, and, though he generally lacked tenderness, his performance enjoyed moments of genuine feeling—once when he recognized the blinded Gloucester (he could hardly get through his speech on why we cry at birth), later in his grief over Cordelia's death.

Lear is a man who must grow in softness and understanding as he diminishes in splendor and authority. For just as Gloucester can (like Oedipus) "see" only when he loses his eyes, so Lear gains spiritual insight only after he has lost the power and the panoply of a king. The symbolic stripping away of his knightly retinue (his "accommodations") anticipates his confrontation with the naked, seemingly witless Edgar—"unaccommodated man" stripped of all civilized trappings, even rational consciousness. Shakespeare is playing on the etymology of the word "accommodation," which derives from the Latin *accommodo*, which means to fit, to put on. And without the commodities borrowed from nature and from civilization—clothing, food, luxuries, our five wits—we are down to "nothing" (the key word of the play), "the thing itself," "no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art." Gripped by this harrowing perception, Lear is compelled to tear off his own "lendings," in order to share the fate of the homeless of his time, those "poor naked wretches" whose "houseless heads and unfed sides" he has just begun to *see*. How we need to see this, too, after ten years of Republican rule.

For if *King Lear* is a play about compassion, it is also a play about justice, about the inequality to be found in nature and society. The beadle who whips the whore desires her himself, the judge is indistinguishable from the thief, the king and the beggar are one—"robes and furred gowns hide all." The injustice suffered by Lear at the hands of his daughters mirrors a universal injustice endured by all humankind at the hands of corrupt officials and indifferent gods, and any appeal to law, order, or morality is sheer hypocrisy. In this shattering worldview, which is as close as Shakespeare ever comes to an expression of nihilism, all human striving becomes a species of vanity. Only love redeems—and that is why Lear, having recovered Cordelia, is content to join her in prison, where they will be able to smile upon the vain ambitions of vainglorious men.

In the wrenching conclusion that proved too painful for the stage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even the consolations of love are taken from Lear: Cordelia is hanged and he must look into an abyss of total despair. A moment of pride over dispatching her murderer prevents his heart from cracking instantly, but Shakespeare soon returns to the recur-

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ring negatives of the play ("Thoul't come no more, Never, never, never, never"), and Lear is at last allowed to die, albeit in the delusion that his last hope for life might still have breath.

What a play! And what a play for our time. No wonder it is being produced this year in theaters throughout the country. It reminds us, too, of how influential *Lear* has been on modern drama—Strindberg's *The Father* in the sexual reversals of Albany and Goneril ("Marry your manhood mew"), Genet's *The Balcony* in the equivalence of the judge and the thief, Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* in the way Edmund like Mackie is suspended between two women, perhaps even the movie *Public Enemy* in the manner in which Albany explodes on his wife ('Shut your mouth, dame, or with this paper [grapefruit?] I will stop it").

Gerald Freedman's production was thoughtful, specific, and coherent, if somewhat routine, delivering the play in clear terms. John Ezell's setting, a configuration of ropes, craggy rocks, and a rough-hewn floor, transformed radically as the evening proceeded, with an upstage stone slab dramatically parted by lasers in the storm scene. The supporting performances were generally solid and rooted, and in two cases they were better than that: I admired Suzy Hunt's sharp feline edges as Goneril (though I would have liked to see her more blighted by her father's curse), and Christopher McCann was a melancholy, pasty-faced Fool, dying in stages from an inclement world. I wasn't much taken, though, with the clunky stage combat between Edgar and Edmund. If we can accept the convention that Gloucester doesn't recognize the voice of his own son, surely we would welcome an imaginative alternative to standard cut-and-lunge swordplay, where characters are killed by a thrust under the armpit.

In moments like these, the production seemed distinctly old-fashioned, especially by contrast with the Beckett-like *Lear* of Peter Brook. Holbrook didn't match Paul Scofield's pity and remorse in his scenes with the Fool. Still, he provided a monumentality that Scofield lacked, and if his performance didn't vary much between thunder claps, he was still a commanding figure onstage—and very brave to take on the role.

George C. Wolfe has set Brecht's **Caucasian Chalk Circle** on a Caribbean island meant to resemble Haiti, which is fair enough considering that Brecht put the Chinese play it was based on in Russian Georgia. Once you've absorbed the concept, however, most of the evening—from the bamboo and stucco setting to the West Indian music to the grotesque puppets and masks—is fairly predictable. Less predictable (or tolerable) is the decision of Wolfe and his adaptor, Thulani Davis, to turn a struggle between equally venal opportunists into racial confrontation. The faction of the grand duke (the Grand Blanc), including the governor and his wife, wear white masks and converse in French accents, while the good guys are black, speaking Calypso English. Despite these miscalculations, however, I was gradually won over by this production, largely because it was attractively played by a talented cast, some of them from Wolfe's recent production of *Spunk*.

At the New York Public Theater, the evening works best in the second half, when the story breaks free from Haitian local color. Reggie Montgomery has been faulted for his Azdak, but I found him ingratiating in a role that is usually considered unplayable now that so few of the great insult comics (Groucho Marx, Jackie Gleason, Zero Mostel) are around to play it. Jerky and bespectacled, gorging on chicken and bananas and thrashing about in his robes while lawyers plead their cases, biting the collar of a female plaintiff's dress, Montgomery's Azdak emerges as a raunchy, ravenous rogue. The actor may miss some of the tragic side of the part, but he doesn't neglect the farce. Charlayne Woodard's dimpled Grusha is a match for him, as are Novella Nelson as the Storyteller and Sharon Washington as Madame Le Gouverneur.

In this version, the climactic scene of the Chalk Circle loses some poignance and power because the child is played by a puppet; an audience can hardly be expected to feel apprehensive about the tearing of wood and straw. Still, though the production has its flaws and the first part seems tedious, by the end of the evening the charm of Brecht's parable manages to manifest itself, and the disappearance of Azdak (along with his golden age of justice) in the midst of a dance brings a tinge of regret. Normally I find productions that base their appeal on updated analogies and site-specific locations to be attention-getting mechanisms—not because I'm a purist, but because the textual investigation tends to get lost in contextual wrappings. If the play can still be glimpsed through the cosmetic surgery, however, I don't mind where it has been set, and I came away from this evening with a sense that I had partially experienced *A Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Wolfe is a skillful director whose progress from *The Colored Museum* through *Spunk* to this show has displayed consistent development. His future should be watched with interest.

Talos

Repetitions, he says, repetitions without end—good God, what weariness;
the changes all in nuances only—Jason, Odysseus, Colchis, Troy,
Minotaur, Talos—and in these very nuances
all the deception and, along with it, the beauty: our work.
I still
retain the image of that giant from the race of bronze men,
with one vein from his throat to the soles of his feet, one vein only
shut off with a bronze nail at its very end. When they removed
that nail, his blood poured out and his life too.
And I say
maybe that's the way of it with all of us, one vein only, sealed by a single nail,
and all of us with the same fear.
Opposite, on the huge white-washed wall,
the driven nails in a row (possibly from unsealed veins) for us to hang up
our overcoats, hats, umbrellas, underwear, and masks.

YANNIS RITSOS

—translated from the Greek by Edmund Keeley

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I have watched the development of Wallace Shawn, on the other hand, with a growing sense of alarm, and his latest piece, **The Fever** at the New York Public Theater, left me very worried about his mood swings. It is a singularly grim monologue, almost two hours long, that confirms my suspicion (first aroused in *Aunt Dan and Lemon*) that Shawn has little talent, despite his growing passion, for philosophical discourse. There is no printed theater program, and Shawn turns the lights on and off himself, economies no doubt related to the shame that he professes over having people work for him. For *The Fever* concerns the author's discovery of poverty and oppression while visiting an unnamed country, where he learned about the "fetishism of commodities" after having a copy of *Das Kapital* delivered to his door. He vomits when he comes across a chambermaid making his bed; he begins to believe that "the life I lead is irredeemably corrupt." Concluding that "I don't deserve to have more than this beggar has," he hints that he as well as the audience should give all that they have to the poor. Off, off, you lendings.

Shawn apparently identifies with King Lear, if not St. Francis, but his confessions reminded me more of Hugo the Anarchist in *The Iceman Cometh*. This engaging man, who "used to be a happy person," who played such a shrewd Sancho Panza to Andre Gregory's Don Quixote in *My Dinner with Andre*, who exposed the dark side of marriage in *Marie and Bruce*, whose lisping performances give pleasure on stage and screen, is now consumed, by his own admission, with "numbness" and "lovelessness." He no longer knows what he believes except that "poor people are beautiful—poor countries are beautiful." The result is that he now bears the pinched features and suppressed rage of an incipient fanatic.

Shawn's exhortations to the audience ("We can't escape our connection to the poor") may be politically correct, but they seem to be manufactured by a guilt machine running on self-hatred. Unlike Spalding Gray, whose *Monster in a Box* establishes a charming rapport with the audience through deep probes into his own life experience, Shawn, though he claims to be "a student of my feelings since I was nine years old," has momentarily lost his capacity for self-understanding. He first performed *The Fever* in living rooms, where it received admiring reactions, no doubt from equally guilty souls. Onstage, it seems like he's having a classic, though public and political, midlife crisis. ●

What time is it in Soviet history?

Czars and Commiczars

By Robert C. Tucker

Western Sovietology and official Soviet thought have differed greatly in their accounts of Soviet history. The standard Soviet texts—they are now under reconsideration—tell a story of the rise of "socialism," and then "developed socialism," on the road to full "communism." The Western version, by contrast, describes what arose under Lenin and Stalin as "Communist totalitarianism." These opposing viewpoints share a premise. Both believe that the October Revolution of 1917, in which Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks took power, marked a fundamental rupture with earlier Russian history.

A longtime dissenter from that view, I believe that what took place after 1917 was a reversion to the Russian past. What emerged under Lenin and Stalin, in fact, was a kind of neo-czarist order that called itself "socialist." This means that certain earlier Russian historical patterns reappeared, albeit under new names. The names are not easy to read, and the patterns are not easy to decipher, for those who are not versed in Russian history, as very many Soviet-educated people are not, as many Western Sovietologists are not.

The view that a revival of old Russian patterns took place after 1917 is now finding favor, however, among various knowledgeable contemporaries on the Soviet side, who, thanks to glasnost, have been voicing in print their thoughts on the relation between the Soviet period and the Russian past. Not surprisingly, this re-evaluation of the past in the Soviet Union is not unanimous. There are those who persist in seeing—now in an anti-Soviet light—a disjunction between the Soviet period and what came before it in Russia. According to the painter Ilya Glazunov, a "chasm" lies between old Russia, which was based on Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality, and the Soviet Union, which is based on atheism, proletarian dictatorship, and internationalism. And the philosopher Aleksandr Tsipko, writing in *Moscow News*, considers the Soviet period a kind of hiatus in history:

> We probably deceive ourselves in thinking that we lived in the twentieth century. Maybe history just performed an experiment on us, freezing our brains, thoughts, and feelings, compelling us to wander about the world asleep, committing a mass of idiocies, murdering one another, doing no end of atrocious things.

Hence the present task for Russia is to "return to the movement of historical time." Some of Tsipko's fellow citizens carry placards that say: "Seventy years on the road to nowhere!"

Still, a different view is widespread among many Soviet intellectuals. As they see it, the seventy tragic years traversed roads previously taken in Russian history. "Feudalism" is the term that some use to express the notion that history in the Soviet period went forward in a backward way—that czarist absolutism, and centralized bureaucratic statism, made a comeback in the framework of the Communist party-state. According to Mikhail Gorbachev's close colleague Aleksandr Yakovlev, "Socialism hasn't really been built in the country. What we have is department feudalism." Fyodor Burlatsky, the editor of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, calls the Soviet system "feudal socialism." The theater director Mark Zakharov calls it "our feudal-patriarchal way of life." And the historian A. Mertsalov refers to the "feudal traditions" of the Soviet Academy of Science, whose thoroughly bureaucratized historical division might be called an "administrative echelon for affairs of historical science."

The revival of old Russian patterns began at the outset of the Soviet period, these thinkers tell us. The nationalization of the country's resources transformed them into state property, which led to a rebirth of historic Russian statism. The forcible retention by the new regime of the great bulk of the minority-inhabited territories on the periphery of the Russian empire meant the factual rebirth of empire under the title of "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." And whatever was claimed for the estab-

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lishment of "Soviet power" by the October Revolution, what actually emerged was a new line of czars under another name, starting with Lenin.

"Soviet power, from the very first days, showed its autocratic and absolutist character, only under different slogans," writes Yuri Feofanov in *Izvestia*. "Rejecting the division of three powers as a bourgeois principle, our state authority took all of them unto itself." Elsewhere he cites the new mayor of Leningrad, the former professor Anatoly Sobchak, as saying, "In Russia, both in the Soviet period and through the centuries, it was not laws that ruled, but persons." So it was, says Feofanov, from Lenin through Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev to Gorbachev. And this primacy of the "First Persons" over laws and institutions extends back through "whole layers" of the history of Russia, whose sixteenth- and seventeenth-century "assemblies of the land" (*zemskie sobory*) had less resemblance to actual parliaments than to Soviet Party congresses, which have simply "sanctified the sovereign's will." Thus it was not the Party, or its apparatus, or even a small group of Party progressives that inaugurated perestroika: it was a new First Person, named Gorbachev.

The declared goal of perestroika has been to dismantle the "administrative-command system" handed down from Stalin's time. The writer Anatoly Ananiev argues that this system had a czarist predecessor, which originated in the second half of the sixteenth century under the "terrible" czar Ivan Grozny: "At the base of the administrative-command system lies a situation in which the people were estranged from the state. It was Ivan Grozny who began this."

The critic Yakov Gordin, writing in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, finds in the Soviet order historical patterns going back to the time of Peter I, in the early eighteenth century, and to the "Iron Czar" Nicholas I (1825-55):

> I do not share the widespread opinion that 1917 marked a great rupture in our history. I daresay that what we call the Soviet period has been, in basic features and significance, a restoration of state principles that ruled from Peter I through Nicholas I, principles that were pressed back after the Great Reforms and reforms of 1905.

One such state principle was serfdom. It prevailed from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries down to the Great Reforms of the 1860s, which began with the emancipation of the serfs. In the system of serfdom, the serf rendered compulsory service to the landowner either in the form of working time (*barshchina*) or produce (*obrok*). This pattern arose again as a result of the collectivization of the peasantry in 1929-33. According to K. Liubenchenko, the vice chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet's Committee on Legislation, "We returned to what existed before 1861, that is, to serfdom, all the way to such a detail as the attachment of the peasants to the land." Vladimir Tikhonov, an agricultural specialist, writes of "serfdom" in the Soviet countryside and describes the contemporary bosses and defenders of that system, such as V. Starodubtsev of the self-styled Peasant Union, as serf-owners (*krepostniki*) and little czars (*tsar'ki*).

Cultural life was also enserfed. The literary scholar Yuri Burtin asserts that "just as our collective-farm countryside, unlike the old serf countryside, where there was either *barshchina* or *obrok*, has had to bear a double burden of both at once, so our literature, unlike most others, has had to go through both a multilevel preliminary censorship and then a punitive censorship afterward." And the theater director Oleg Efremov observes that after the shock wave of collectivization came

> smaller-scale actions aimed at the complete and total statification and enserfment of the country's spiritual life. . . . They created a state for officials and a theater for officials. . . . We now stand on the threshold of the abolition of theatrical serfdom, which developed in the depths of the Stalinist regime, where the theatrical setup was part and parcel of the whole system.

One pillar of the czarist administrative-command system that reappeared under a Soviet name was the rank order of higher officialdom. In 1722 Czar Peter I promulgated a Table of Ranks, which established a hierarchy of fourteen military and corresponding civilian ranks, and made service to the autocratic state a highroad to noble status. Starting on the bottom rung of the ladder, a military officer or civil servant could obtain personal and eventually hereditary nobility on reaching the requisite higher rungs (classes one to four carried hereditary nobility). The Table created an aristocracy of rank (*chin*) and organized the czarist ruling elite as a corps of uniformed holders of rank (*chinovniki*). Vladen Sirotkin, a Soviet historian, finds that in essence this system rose again in the Soviet period.

Its name was *nomenklatura*, and it differed from the czarist system in that it was not made public in the czarist way. In numbers, it became many times larger than the czarist structure. The *nomenklatura*, as is well known, comprises the system of higher Party and Party-controlled governmental ranks and appointments. Sirotkin tells us that Stalin's

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subordinates back in the 1920s even went to old czarist official records for particulars on how to organize the *nomenklatura*, whose predecessor was the higher rank-holding class comprising the top four ranks, subject to appointment by the czar.

How history turned full circle, and the dark postwar Stalin years came to resemble the repressive 1830s and '40s of Nicholas I, came home to some of us in Moscow's foreign colony at the time. In 1948, in a secondhand book shop in Moscow, I picked up an out-of-print Russian translation of *Russia in 1839* by the Marquis de Custine. It was published in 1930 by the Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles, which Stalin had disbanded in 1935. Custine, who was no supporter of the French Revolution, came to Russia in 1839 as a sort of monarchist fellow traveler, and was graciously received in the closed Petersburg court society, much as the fellow-traveling Gide was received in Stalin's Moscow of the later 1930s. As with Gide, even a visit of four months under close surveillance showed Custine enough to disillusion him.

In his book, written in the form of letters home to France, Custine found that Nicholas I's Russia was not the civilized monarchy he had imagined, but a true tyranny, a serf state with a czar-cult upheld by officialdom. "The Russian Empire," he wrote in a typical passage, "is an enormous theatrical hall where, from all the boxes, people try to follow what is happening behind the scenes." Of the czar: "There is no man on earth with such unlimited power." Of *chin*: "A military regime applied to society as a whole." Of the mode of government: "Absolute monarchy moderated by murder." The book went through many editions in Western Europe, but czarist censorship prevented it from being published in Russia. Some educated Russians, however, read it in French, and one of them, a dissident of the day named Aleksandr Herzen, called it "the most entertaining and intelligent book on Russia by a foreigner." Higher Russian circles were indignant. By covert arrangement with Count Benckendorf, chief of the Third Department of His Majesty's Chancellery, the Russian secret police of that time, a semi-official publicist named N. I. Grech wrote an anti-Custine tract in French for circulation abroad.

Custine's Nicholaian Russia was so strikingly similar in some ways to the Stalinist Russia that we foreigners observed in 1948 that the book seemed to us to be *A Journey for Our Time*, the title given it in an English translation made by Phyllis Kohler, wife of the U.S. deputy chief of mission in Moscow, Foy Kohler, and published in America in 1953. Walter Bedell Smith, the U.S. ambassador in Moscow between 1946 and 1949, wrote in a foreword to it: "I could have taken many pages from his journal and, after substituting present-day names and dates for those of a century ago, have sent them to the State Department as my own official reports."

The Soviet Nicholaian period extended from Stalin's final years through the neo-Stalinist administration of Brezhnev. This comes through in a memoir published in 1990 in *Oganyok* by the Soviet filmmaker El'dar Riazanov. In 1978 he and a colleague, Grigory Gorin, set out to make a film to which they gave the title "Say a Word for a Poor Hussar." Their purpose was to say something by means of hints and allusions about Stalin's terror-filled time, but to do it in a film ostensibly about the time of the Iron Czar, when blue-uniformed gendarmes from the Third Department spied on an oppressed Russian society and made life very hard even for a great poet like Lermontov. Goskino, the Soviet cinema ministry, rejected the script and treated the authors, in its customary way, as serfs. But Gosteleradio, the ministry of television, decided to take up the project as a way of making a bureaucratic move against Goskino.

It was then, writes Riazanov, that there

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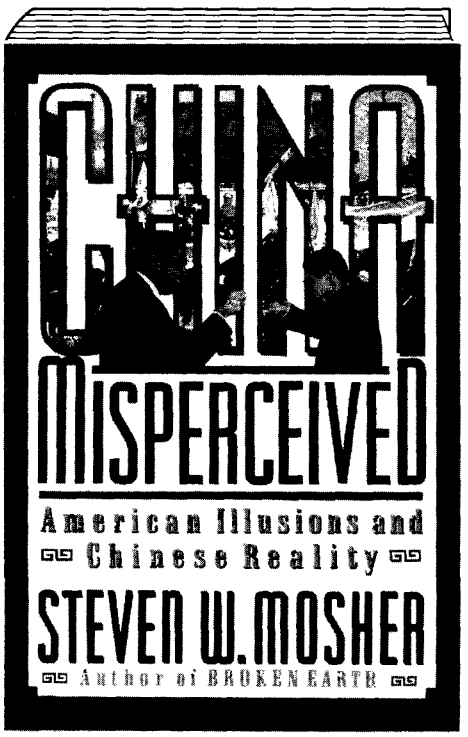

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began the process of polishing up by censorship that "so edits a branchy pine tree that it becomes a telegraph pole." At one point he and Gorin were informed that their script paid too much attention to the Third Department and portrayed it too negatively. Riazanov comments:

> Good Lord! Did Benckendorf ever think that a hundred and some years later, his honor would be upheld by Communists at the head of Soviet television! Of course, their solicitude for the Third Department was understandable: they were terribly afraid of distressing the department over on Dzerzhinsky Square. They didn't seem to realize that by equating the Third Department with contemporary State Security they were giving themselves away. In their thoughts they equated these two organizations and they were striving to stand up for the KGB by whitewashing the Nicholaian gendarmerie.

Later, the two filmmakers were forced to drop the idea of having a hero of their film declaim, before his execution, Lermontov's classic quatrain: "Farewell unwashed Russia, / land of slaves, land of masters, / and you in those blue uniforms, and / you the people that obey them."

The higher *chinovnik* from Gosteleradio explained: "No verses needed. Not those anyway." Riazanov broke in to say: "But that's Lermontov. That's a classic. We learned those verses in third grade." "Nothing doing," replied the *chinovnik*. "And you understand why." Such was the czarist Soviet Russia of 1980, a land from whose airways the Lermontov of "Farewell unwashed Russia, land of slaves, land of masters" was banished. Riazanov says that the emasculation of the original film was "an indictment of everything on which the Russian social system rested and still rests. For we are the true and faithful heirs of all that was worst in czarism."

Nicholas I was succeeded by Alexander II, whose Great Reforms, starting with the abolition of serfdom, caused him to be remembered as the "czar-liberator." But this reforming czar was also a tragic one. As he drove in his carriage to the palace in 1881 to sign a draft of the first Russian Constitution, he was blown to bits by a bomb hurled by revolutionary extremists from a group calling itself the People's Will. Reaction set in under Alexander III. If the Soviet Nicholaian period lasted through the early 1980s, what happened in 1985, as various present-day Russians see it, was the accession of a new czar-liberator. His name was Mikhail Gorbachev. For was it not, asks historian Yuri Korolev, the earlier one, Alexander II, who in 1861, for the first time in Russia, proclaimed glasnost?

All this may cast light on a notable phenomenon: the keen interest that Russians are showing nowadays in czarism and czars. Nicholas II, who was executed with members of his family in 1918, is mourned by many as a martyr. Merezhkovsky's play *Paul I*, written in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1905, is showing to full houses in Moscow and arouses some sympathy for this non-reforming czar. Announced for the new season in Moscow's theaters are plays about Ivan Grozny, Czar Fyodor, Boris Godunov, Peter I, Catherine II, and Nicholas II. And Glinka's opera, revived under Stalin as *Ivan Susanin*, is now playing in the Bolshoi Theater under its nineteenth-century title, *A Life for the Czar*. What does all this mean? The drama critic Andrei Karaulov, in commenting on a current play about a czar, suggests that "the audience is mainly interested in the parallel with the current reforming czar, Gorbachev."

The new reforming czar soon proclaimed the need for perestroika, a deep-seated reformation of the Soviet political culture. But he could not carry through such a project by his own governing efforts alone. Success in dismantling the administrative-command system and creating a new one depends on the ability and the willingness of society to adopt new ways of thinking and acting, and on the willingness of a still privileged and powerful governing elite to foster such new ways, or at least not to resist them.

Thus, what happened in the later 1980s, according to the historian Sirotkin, bears comparison with what happened under the reforming czar Alexander II in the 1860s and 1870s. It was then that a schism opened up within the czarist *nomenklatura* between reformers who supported Alexander II's perestroika and conservatives who opposed it. Something similar, Sirotkin says, has happened within the Soviet *nomenklatura*. Those earlier conservatives were opposed to all talk of a constitution or parliament; the contemporary ones oppose all talk of private property.

Now, in the sixth year of perestroika, the "serf-owners" still dominate the countryside, and the remnants of Stalinist serfdom have yet to be abolished. *Izvestia*, these days a reformist paper, evokes the later nineteenth century with a resounding headline: "Give the peasant land and freedom." The writer Boris Mikhailov bids the intelligentsia to "go to the people." New Westernizers fend off attacks by new Slavophiles of various persuasions. One of the claimants to Slavophile leadership, of course, is the Vermont-dwelling Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who, in a huge homily printed in 26 million copies in the Soviet press, tells Mother Russia how to put her crumbling house in order. And V. Lakshin publishes a lengthy "interview" in *Izvestia* with the great nineteenth-century Russian satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin, drawn exclusively from the latter's critical writings about czarist Russia, on the manifold ills and problems of contemporary Soviet life.

The neo-czarist Soviet order has almost ceased to function. Still, it has not yet been displaced, or it has only begun to be displaced, by new political and economic structures that work. The situation reminds one Soviet writer of something that Herzen observed in the later nineteenth century about Russia having shed an old skin but not yet having grown a new one. The Soviet era as we have known it is ending, but a post-Soviet order has only started to appear. And so we arrive at the question: What time is it, now, in the Soviet cycle of Russia's history?

Voices over there offer two answers, which are really two versions of one. According to the first, Russia is entering a new Time of Troubles, or *smuta*, comparable to the one that afflicted Muscovy between 1598 and 1613. After Ivan Grozny died, the influential courtier Boris Godunov became de facto ruler during the reign of Ivan's son Fyodor, and became czar in his own right in 1598. A famine and a plague in 1601-02 were followed by Boris's death, political unrest, a breakdown of the state order, a succession of pretenders to the throne, civil war, and Polish intervention. Only with the election of Mikhail Romanov to the throne in 1613 was a new dynasty established and stability restored.

Nowadays, as economic and political turmoil mounts and the empire disintegrates, predictions of a new *smuta*, or the start of one, proliferate. Ruslan Skrynnikov of Leningrad University, who recently gave a paper on the first *smuta* at the World Congress of Soviet and East European Studies in England, mentioned in discussion that his audiences at public lectures on this subject in Leningrad have grown much larger of late. The people, he explained, have a "premonition of *smuta*."

The writer Viacheslav Kostikov goes further. He writes that Russia has experienced several times of troubles in its history. Their deeper cause, he suggests, lies always in a state power that deadens society, represses glasnost, and turns citizens into slaves who are easy to rule. Thus it was under Ivan Grozny, and the reason-

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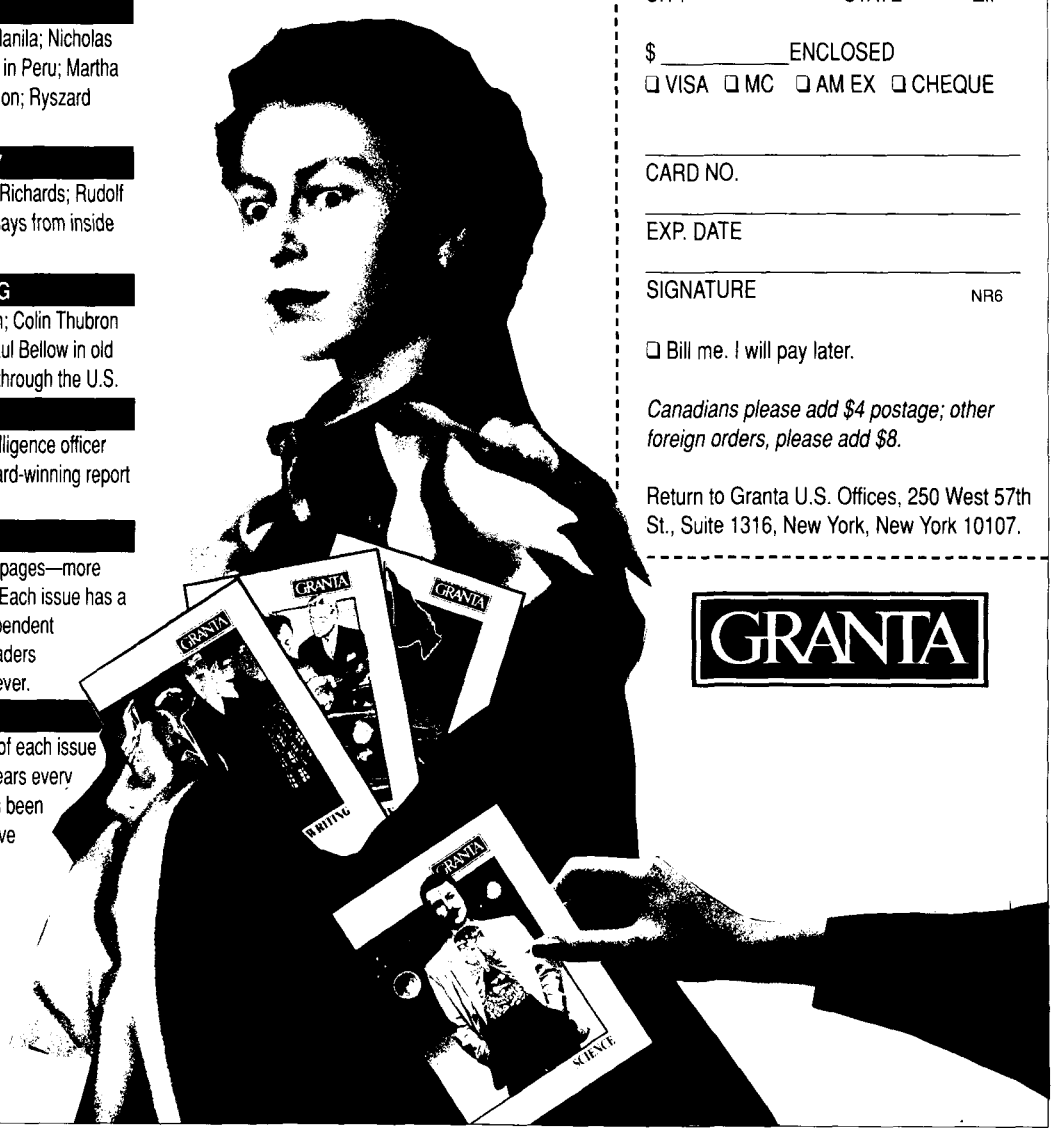

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able leader who came afterward in the person of Boris Godunov (a Gorbachev of his time, the author hints) was unable to prevent the collapse at the end of the seventeenth century. The tragedy of Russian history, Kostikov concludes, lies in the fact that "the times of troubles arise after the deaths of tyrants and dictators. So it was with Ivan Grozny, and so it was with Stalin."

There is another answer to our question. The Soviet Union, it is said, is now in the early years of the twentieth century. Some proponents of this position point to the time following Nicholas II's October Manifesto of 1905, when the Duma came into being as a Russian parliament and legal political parties emerged. So, now, a semi-elective parliament has appeared in the new Congress of People's Deputies and its Supreme Soviet, and various small parties are emerging, including Social Democrats, Constitutional Democrats, Russian Democrats, anarcho-syndicalists, and monarchists.

Further, as Sirotkin observes, the democratic developments of then and now are accompanied by another, ominous parallel: the rise of arch-nationalist, anti-Semitic movements of the radical right. Then there was the "Union of the Russian People," to which Nicholas II gave his blessing. Its slogan, "Beat the Jews and save Russia," was implemented by the thugs of the Black Hundreds, who perpetrated pogroms against the Jews in 1905-07. Now the threat of pogroms by the fascist Pamyat society, which has the support of prominent Russian nationalist literary figures, is among the reasons that Soviet Jews are leaving in large numbers.

Pyotr Stolypin, the czarist prime minister who inaugurated a land reform in 1906 that aimed to end communal land tenure and to establish peasants as individual farmers, is now receiving favorable attention from Soviet advocates of a similar land reform that could enable Soviet peasants to leave their collectives and become individual farmers who own the land they till. G. Bystrov, a Soviet law professor, considers the 1906 Stockholm congress of the Russian Marxist party to be very topical. It was at that meeting that Lenin and Plekhanov clashed over the land question. Lenin wanted the nationalization of land to be a part of the party's program. Plekhanov opposed him, warning that it would lead to centralization and bureaucratization. His plan was to give peasants property rights to their land and to turn over the landlords' estates to municipalities, which would rent them out to peasants. "Today, we know who was right in that dispute," the professor observes, "and it's time to recognize it honestly and not pay homage to that utopian project of nationalization." Out goes Lenin.

The Soviet period has reached its 1917, according to some proponents of the second answer to our question. The historian Pavel Volobuev finds the situation in the fall of 1990 stunningly similar to "the time between February and October." Now, as then, the country is in a condition of total crisis. Just as that earlier systemic crisis was a result of centuries of czarist absolutism, the present one is an outgrowth of an even more ferocious administrative-command system. Now, as then, the country is in the midst of a stormy democratization, with Petrograd and Moscow again in the lead. Mass-meeting democracy, with all its heated passions, was and is again going full blast; all sorts of new parties are again appearing; politicized social forces are polarizing, depriving the reformists (now called "centrists") of hope for national conciliation.

In 1917, continues Volobuev, some politicized army generals were moving toward the Kornilov revolt, which paved the way for revolutionary extremists—that is, for the Bolsheviks—to take power. In 1990, however, it would be a good idea for generals to stay out of politics. In 1917, to the dismay of conservative forces, the country was moving to the left. In 1990 it is moving in that direction again, to the dismay of the main conservative force again, which is the Communist Party. Never before 1917 was there such mass responsiveness in Russia to astrologers, magicians, prophets, and faith healers; and so there is again today.

The present situation also reminds the philosopher Nikolai Mikhailov of the post-February situation in 1917. The February Revolution and the rise of the Provisional Government, he says, were the perestroika of that time, or the start of it. The parallel, he says, raises several questions. Can the post-February democratic coalition, meaning those on the left today, forestall the loss of their popularity? Can the new governing structures avoid the errors of the Provisional Government? How real is the possibility, today or tomorrow, of an attempted neo-Kornilov generals' revolt? And can a new October be avoided? Here Mikhailov explains that the October 1917 coup was "the price paid for the opportunism of the fathers of the February perestroika, for their inconsistency, their shifting first to the left and then to the right, their fear of radical reform and action."

By this analogy, Gorbachev's regime is the contemporary Provisional Government, perestroika is the course toward an evolutionary, democratic development of the country, and the danger is that this Provisional Government will go the way of its predecessor—that it will fail to pursue, consistently and firmly, a line toward radical systemic change. The threat that looms in 1990 is either a new military putsch like the Kornilov rising in 1917, or a new October, that is, a new takeover by today's Bolsheviks.

And who might today's Bolsheviks be? They are, according to A. Uliukaev, the ultraradicals, the extremists, the intolerant and the impatient ones, those prepared to fight for human happiness to the last man, whose "genetic Bolshevism" takes the form of a fanatical anti-Bolshevism. The "genetic Bolsheviks," says Liudmilla Saraskina, have representatives in the extremist "Democratic Union," whose organ, *The Free Word*, uses epithets like "political prostitute" to refer to liberals or centrists—in the polemical style, she adds, of that ultraleft Bolshevik Ulyanov-Lenin, who despised liberals.

The two answers to our question, I suggest, are really one. The revolutionary period, with the ending of the Romanov dynasty, the disintegration of the empire, internal collapse, disorder, civil war, and foreign intervention, was a new Time of Troubles. This is not the way that we in the West have generally thought of it. We have been influenced, perhaps overinfluenced, by Crane Brinton's *The Anatomy of Revolution*, which appeared in 1938, in which Russia's twentieth-century revolution was analyzed along with England's revolution of the seventeenth century and America's and France's revolution of the eighteenth as a paradigmatically modern, hence modernizing, phenomenon. Some Russians who lived through the revolutionary years, however, thought differently. For them, that period was another Russian breakdown, another dynastic interregnum, another *smuta*. That is how P. B. Struve characterized it in 1918 and how Iurii Got'e saw it in his diary of 1917-22. (Terence Emmons has given the title *Time of Troubles* to his English-language edition of Got'e's diary. And Lars Lih has likened the revolutionary period to a *smuta* in his new book, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921*.)

If we see the Revolution as a second Time of Troubles, and hence the rise of the Soviet regime as the emergence of a new dynasty (the *Bol'sheviki*), it ceases to seem strange that a new cycle of Russia's history has unfolded in our century, and that a new *smuta* threatens now. Such a reading of the Soviet era might have two strengths from a scholarly and

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political standpoint. By showing that czarism rose again in what seemed, somewhat illusorily, an epoch of modernization through urbanization and industrial development, this reading can render the present systemic breakdown more comprehensible: it is a largely archaic system that has nearly ceased to function. This way of thinking may help us comprehend the tenacity of the elements of the old order that still exist. For Russia, the system that we glibly call "Communism" has roots that go deep into the centuries, and are not so easily pulled up.

Can Russia at long last escape from the cycle of administrative-command systems followed by times of troubles? That, of course, is the most pressing question. Our historically-minded contemporaries in the Soviet Union are asking it in their own manner. One of them, A. Sabov, human rights editor for *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, writes: "If you take a close look, all our Russian and Soviet perestroikas came exclusively from above and were just as easily withdrawn by the next oncoming authority. And the whole question is: Why? Why have they never come from below in any other form than that of an all-destroying tornado?" And here is the writer Viktor Erofeev's formulation:

> Can it be that this sixth part of the globe has its own special relationship to time and social development, so that stagnation and misfortune are the constant elements not only of the regimes of Brezhnev and Nicholas I but of Russian national history in general, a history that moves in circles? If so, what historical swamp will eventually swallow up perestroika and all the hopes connected with it? How can we break out of the vicious circle?

It is hard to answer, except to say that it will take much time and much effort, no little good fortune, and maybe substantial assistance from the United States, which came to the Soviet Union's aid with Lend-Lease in World War II, and has as much reason to want Russia to emerge democratically victorious this time as it had for wanting Russia to emerge militarily victorious last time.

If fortune smiles, this reforming czar will go down as the founder of a presidency. This Provisional Government will stop wavering and seek systemic change that can stabilize the national situation. This Duma will stand. The incipient law-governed state will evolve further, and Benckendorf's agency will become a normal intelligence service. The imperial structure will be replaced by that of a commonwealth of nations or confederation. Russian generals will respect the supremacy of civil authority. Peasants will become proprietors of the land they till if they wish, and the defenders of the collective-farm system will go into retirement. A de-statified economy will emerge and with it a modicum of prosperity for the people. Russian culture will prosper in freedom. The government will continue cooperating with other governments to establish an orderly world under international law, in which the demographic, technological, economic, and cultural forces now making for human catastrophe can be checked before it is too late.

If fortune frowns, however, we pretty well know from history what that will mean. Another round of the cycle, after another full-scale Russian *smuta* climaxed by civil war. When he was asked whether he thought the latter outcome likely, the historian Ruslan Skrynnikov simply exclaimed, "May God forbid!" ●

Humanism, Yiddish-style

BY STANISLAW BARANCZAK

The I. L. Peretz Reader
edited and with an introduction by Ruth R. Wisse

(Library of Yiddish Classics/Schocken Books, 381 pp., $27.50)

For any American reader, this will be a handy and skillfully edited selection of the most representative writings of one of the masters of world literature. For any Jewish American reader, it will also be a monument in commemoration of one of the central figures in modern Jewish culture, a writer who, along with Mendele Mokher Seforim and Sholem Aleichem, laid the foundations for the modern Yiddish literary tradition. For a Polish-American reader such as myself, this book is all those things, too; but it is also, inevitably, a book about Poland, and even more fascinating for being focused not exactly on Poland itself. On Jewish life in Poland? Obviously. But its other, ever present theme is the paradox of literature itself—the paradox that emerges when literature, the art of communicating our humanity to other humans, faces a world that has been dehumanized by hatred.

One of the short stories included in this collection of fictional and nonfictional writings of Isaac Leybush Peretz (1852-1915) is based on an anecdotal scheme so outlandishly symmetrical that the reader can almost smell some irregularity waiting in the wings. In 1891, when "In the Mail Coach" was written, even the heavily didactic sort of realism that still lingered in the literatures of Central Europe seldom allowed symmetries like this one to stay undisturbed beyond the story's end.

While traveling by mail coach, Peretz's narrator chats, on two separate occasions, with two fellow passengers, a Jew and a Pole. The former is a total stranger who eagerly tells him the story of his life; the latter happens to be (here we begin to see through Peretz's transparent ploy) the narrator's childhood buddy. The courses of their lives had diverged early: "I went to the dark and grimy Jewish boy's *kheyder*, and he went to the bright and emancipated gymnasium. . . . I broke my head over talmudic legal problems, and he broke his teeth on Greek and Latin." Yet they remained close friends throughout their adolescence, devising "plans to change the world." As they now meet unexpectedly after a long separation, the narrator is relieved to find out that Janek Polniewski, though embittered by the years, has not changed much.

Their conversation, naturally enough, turns to the subject of anti-Semitism:

> "It is"—he speaks in Polish, of course—"it's a kind of cholera, an epidemic."
>
> "Some say that it is political."
>
> "Don't believe it," Polniewski declares. "Politics doesn't create new realities. It can only take advantage of those that exist, suppressing some parts and intensifying others. . . . Human nature, not politics, spins the thread of history. Politics only picks up the threads, twists them and tangles them and ties in knots. Anti-Semitism is a disease, and politics stands by the sickbed like a stupid, vicious doctor who wants to prolong the illness. Politics makes use of anti-Semitism: . . . A protesting fist is raised, so they shove an emaciated, stooped, Jewish back under it; if not, other bones would crack. But . . . the fist, the hatred, have an existence of their own. . . . Only healthy minds endure!"
>
> "How many healthy minds are there among us?" I ask.
>
> "How many? Very few, unfortunately," answers Polniewski.

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To illustrate his point, he proceeds to tell the narrator how difficult it was once for him and his late wife to make friends with their neighbor, a young Jewish woman, unhappily married to an impoverished Orthodox Jew. And here the narrator is startled by what seems to him an unbelievable coincidence. Did not his previous interlocutor in the same mail coach tell him the same story just hours before, only from the Jewish husband's point of view? Could it be the same woman, the one who was neglected by her pious husband and found solace in reading "unkosher" Polish, German, and Yiddish books, which ultimately strained their marital relations even more?

But the coincidence is simply not there. Polniewski's description of the woman he knew does not fit what the narrator has learned about the looks of the Jew's wife. Peretz is too wise a writer not to disturb the symmetry of his plot in the story's conclusion: it is precisely the fact that there was more than one woman involved that brings the entire plot back from the farfetched to the probable. Moreover, it makes the case more typical and the story more relevant: "What a fool I was! Was there only one Jewish housewife who fit this description?"

If, however, "In the Mail Coach" is saved from sentimental simplemindedness, it is not merely thanks to that final line, which saves it from an improbably neat ending. It is owed, rather, to the narrator's awareness of the tragic nature of the two similar stories. For the sad truth is that even the noblest attempt to obliterate ethnic, cultural, and religious divisions solves nothing. It may work in the short run: it may help strike up a friendship, fill someone's empty days with a semblance of meaning, open someone's eyes to new sights. In the long run, however, it fosters only more unhappiness: the well-meaning offer of friendship may be tantamount to an attempt "to corrupt a Jewish woman by drawing her away from her God, from her parents, from her husband—from her whole life." You may gladden people by opening their eyes to new sights, but not if you show them lands that they cannot enter without betraying themselves.

This kind of "corruption" works, naturally, both ways. In "Stories," we find an exact reversal of the motif. Here a poor Polish seamstress finds a reason to live and, at the same time, loses herself in tales told to her by a young Jewish writer: "Jew, have a story ready for me," she begs (or demands). "But a happy one, with a princess. Life is so sad. And you mustn't dare to touch me. I'm not interested in you." Literature as the only means of reaching across untraversable borders and literature as a corrupting power that always promises more than it can possibly deliver: this seems to be the central antinomy of Peretz's thought. It is thanks to the constant presence of this conscious self-contradiction that his writing, which is otherwise very much a reflection of his optimistic epoch, ultimately strikes a note of tragic doubt; and it is a note that finds an echo in our experiences a hundred years later.

The "Polish books" that had such an ambiguous impact on the two heroines of "In the Mail Coach" had a similar effect on Peretz himself. In "My Memoirs," written two years before his death, he describes his first encounter with non-Jewish literature. It happened quite late in his adolescence. Born in 1852 in the town of Zamosc—it was then part of the Russian empire, but an ethnically Polish place with great Polish cultural traditions—he was educated by rather poorly trained teachers and rabbis in his hometown, and in the nearby town of Szczebrzeszyn. This period of formal education ended long before his bar mitzvah: beginning in his early teens, he read unsupervised in the study house. And his fame as a prodigy grew so fast that a local bookdealer offered him the key to his private library:

> The key was to open a new world of books for me and a new chapter in my life. . . . There were books in three languages: most were in Polish, including many translations from other languages; some were in German, and a few in French. . . . I began with the Polish books, and true to my word, I proceeded in order, starting to the right of the doorway—as it says in Ecclesiastes, "A wise man's *understanding is at his right* hand." The books had been shelved at random, with novels, scientific works, and serial romances all mixed up and scattered. . . . But I read on anyway.

I. L. PERETZ BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Peretz's literary world up to that point had been bounded by the Torah and Maimonides. A triple wall—of the study house, of his closely knit family circle, and of his hometown (Zamosc, a fortress town, was literally surrounded by walls)—shut him off from the outside world almost completely. When he first encountered, earlier in his adolescence, an actual forest, he had to ask his father for an explanation of the noise he was hearing; he had never had occasion to understand that trees rustle as they sway in the wind. The depictions of landscape in the novels he began to devour in the bookdealer's library were initially almost incomprehensible to him (and his own rare descriptions of nature in his later writing still have a distinctly bookish quality).

Similarly, the awakening sexuality of the young Peretz was so intertwined with the rapture with which he imbibed the "new" books, from poetry to "serial romances," that these two experiences became one in his mind. His literary debut in Yiddish, the long poem "Monish,"

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which opens Ruth Wisse's collection, is an example of such a union. This story of a young Jewish boy distracted from his studies by his affection for a gentile girl seems to owe as much to the author's experience as to his readings in European poetry, in Heine above all. For Peretz, the notion of sin became closely linked with the notion of lay literature, and its urge to capture the physical world by naming it. And yet there was also another perspective on this transgressive linguistic appetite. Not unlike the sexual desire underpinning the most sublime love, the written word, too, had glorious uses: literature's power to reach out in search of human contact was unmatched.

This antinomian vision runs through virtually every text in *The I. L. Peretz Reader*. Compare just two characteristic works: the journalistic itinerary (or, rather, a series of brief sketches combining elements of the essay, reportage, and short story) titled, somewhat heavily, "Impressions of a Journey Through the Tomaszow Region in the Year 1890," and any of the short stories, say, the famous "If Not Higher." The difference between the approach and style of these two finally amounts to a difference in visions of literature's role. These visions seem to have nothing in common; indeed they seem to cancel each other out.

"Impressions" strives for an objective, almost naturalistic description; it does not do much more than scrupulously record events that occur during the journey and details of the lives of the people encountered in its course. (The series was the result of an actual "statistical" trip through the Tomaszow region, which Peretz undertook in 1890 on assignment from a wealthy sponsor: he was to collect reliable data about the scope of poverty among provincial Polish Jews and thus help to thwart anti-Semitic accusations of "parasitism" and draft evasion.) With the possible exception of some passages from the much later "My Memoirs," this may be the most factual and down-to-earth piece in the volume.

"If Not Higher," by contrast, is an equally characteristic example of writing whose task is to create a world as it should be rather than as it is. It is a traditional parable. Or, to be precise, it adapts to modern use the genre of the Hasidic tale, the primary function of which was to inspire faith, to instill piety, to teach moral principles. The renowned rabbi in this story is believed by his followers to ascend to heaven once a year, between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, to plead with God on behalf of the faithful. One day a skeptical Litvak (a Jew from Lithuania, traditionally considered a votary of rationalism and anti-Hasidic bias) hides under the rabbi's bed to catch him in an act of fraud. In the morning, however, he sees the rabbi dress like a common worker and wander incognito through the bad neighborhoods, cutting wood for the poor and elderly as an act of charity. The doubting Litvak himself becomes the holy man's follower, and whenever someone mentions the rabbi's yearly ascension to heaven, he adds under his breath, "if not higher."

It might seem that Peretz's aim in "If Not Higher" is a pure idealization of reality's inherent goodness, whereas the aim of "The Journey" is a pure denunciation of reality's evil. In other words, the purpose of "If Not Higher" is to lift the reader's eyes toward heaven (and its rewards); the purpose of "The Journey" is to direct his gaze toward the earth (and its problems). Still, in Peretz the divide between these two approaches is never clear-cut. In fact, "If Not Higher" is not merely a variation on a Hasidic theme; it is also, and perhaps mainly, a polemic with it. After all, what the rabbi does to improve the human lot on earth is equal to, in terms of its religious and moral significance, "if not higher" than, what he might do for his people had he indeed ascended to heaven. At the same time, the rational and pragmatic statistician in "The Journey" undertakes his trip "through the Tomaszow region" in order to discover that statistics can never encompass the entirety of human needs. Even the poorest of the poor retain some degree of their God-given human dignity, and even in the most adverse conditions a human being wants from God something more than a full stomach and a roof above the head.

That Peretz was never able to—perhaps he was wise enough not to wish to—simplify this fundamental dualism into an unequivocal ideology accounts for the continuous literary interest of his work. To be sure, his prose contains scattered pockets of typical late-nineteenth-century narrative rhetoric. He often felt compelled to end a short story with a rather obvious moral, as if he did not trust his reader's mental powers. Yet he trusted his reader enough, in the deeper philosophical sense, to leave him face to face with the irresolvability of the most basic conflicts of human existence.

In the years when Zionism, socialism, and assimilationism were scrambling to sell the Jewish public their respective sweeping solutions to all the problems of the Jews, Peretz remained what he always was: a writer, therefore someone naturally trained in the school of human diversi-

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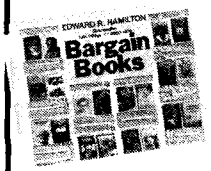

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ty and aware of the tragic essence of the human condition. As we read him today, he seems to remind us on every page that easy solutions do not exist. Human beings cannot be made identical or be made to think identically. Any ideology that claims it will succeed in that project, therefore, is either a sham or a crime. Human beings cannot be reduced to the spiritual or the material. Any ideology that proposes such a reduction, therefore, is plainly wrong. Human beings cannot be made responsible for being born within this or that country, social class, race, or nation. Any form of punishment for their origins, therefore, is contrary to reason and conscience.

As I have said, I may not be the most objective reviewer of this book. Certainly not now, when my part of Europe seems, on my pessimistic days, to have gone crazy. What is one supposed to think about people liberating themselves from the idiocy of a political system that everybody hated but nobody could topple, only to replace its yoke with the even more sickening idiocy of racism—a racism, what's more, with no actual object of hatred around? The words of Peretz's Polish character, "The fist, the hatred, have an existence of their own," ring true once again, alas; and his next sentence, "Only healthy minds endure," sounds almost ironic in its optimism. And yet that sentence is true, too. In Zamosc, in Tomaszow, even in Szczebrzeszyn with its awe-inspiring name, all over Poland, Russia, the Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary, behind every pathetic blockhead trying to quell his frustrations by spraying walls with anti-Semitic graffiti, there are infinitely more people who think and behave as decent human beings should.

Reminding myself of such people's existence, I think simultaneously of the shelf of "Polish books" that Peretz read so avidly as a teenager. Teenagers in today's Poland, 120 years later, not only read some of those same Polish books, but many of them also reach for the Polish translations of Peretz, or Sholem Aleichem, or Isaac Bashevis Singer, or other Jewish authors who once lived in Poland and wrote in Hebrew or Yiddish; and also for the books of Julian Stryjkowski, or Adolf Rudnicki, or Henryk Grynberg, or Jaroslaw Marek Rymkiewicz, or other authors who have written in Polish about Jewish life in Poland. As long as there are these books and these readers, as long as literature teaches us to respect the otherness of the other, and to keep in mind that (in Milosz's words) "the true enemy of man is generalization," we may have some hope. Peretz, this cautious but still hopeful believer in the power of literature's universal language, only seems to be a figure of the distant past, of a more innocent time when people still deluded themselves that a book or two could save mankind from drowning in the cesspool of its own hatred. In fact, his writing reminds us of one thing that is no delusion at all: though grasping a book may not help us get out, without such a lifesaver we will only sink faster.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK is the author of *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays* (Harvard University Press).

Unacknowledged Legislators

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Regulating a New Economy: Public Policy and Economic Change in America, 1900-1933 by Morton Keller

(Harvard University Press, 320 pp., $27.50)

After the Rights Revolution: Reconceiving the Regulatory State by Cass R. Sunstein

(Harvard University Press, 288 pp., $25)

There is high drama in the creation of landmark legislation, like the recently enacted Clean Air amendments of 1990. Within such epic struggles, the great issues of a mixed economy get debated. Do we want faster economic growth or a safer and cleaner environment? What are the proper domains of public and private responsibility? Politicians, lobbyists, editorial writers, talk-show hosts, and other pontificators weigh in. Business associations issue grave warnings; consumer and environmental groups conjure up frightening scenarios on the other side. Indignation runs high. Pressures mount. The vote is near: Will it pass the House? What will the Senate do? How will the two versions be reconciled in conference? Will the White House go along? At last, in a final teeth-clenching, death-defying act of courage or cowardice (depending on your point of view), the die is cast. The legislation is enacted, or it isn't. The drama is over.

More likely, however, the real drama hasn't even begun, or else it was under way years before the legislators ever got into the act. The practical, day-to-day struggle over government regulation is waged continuously by government bureaucrats and federal judges, as they interpret and reinterpret statutes—some newly enacted, others enacted decades before. The bureaucrats and the judges fill in the legislative blanks, giving meaning to vague statutory language, updating obsolete legislation, applying the law to circumstances that legislators never dreamed of, determining detailed rights and duties that were never specified in the legislation. This subterranean process lacks the drama of Congress and the White House; but it is here that the real contours of the public and private sectors of the economy are mapped. The rules by which America is governed rarely emerge directly from the legislative and executive branches. They emanate instead from this third, hybrid branch: the bureaucratic-judicial regulatory system.

The responsibility for the new Clean Air Act now falls to the Environmental Protection Agency and to the federal courts, which will be reviewing what the EPA does. EPA bureaucrats will claim that they are only implementing the statute; federal judges will say that they are only ensuring that the EPA's implementation is in accord with Congress's intent. But these modest protestations are for the cameras. The bureaucrats and judges, motivated by their own preconceptions of the public interest, as modified by the relentless arguments of parties that can best afford lobbyists and litigators at these lower levels of government, will be making

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new law. Although the 1990 act purports to create a market in "pollution rights" to be bought and sold by companies, and thus reduces the necessity of picayune rules governing every source of air pollution, it leaves thousands of questions unanswered about how the new market is to be organized and run. And in answering these questions, EPA bureaucrats and federal judges will create a complex system with profound implications for American industry and the environment.

How to square the lawmaking activities of unelected bureaucrats and judges with the ideal of a democratic society? The usual defense of bureaucratic and judge-made law is that such decisions can always be reversed by elected officials. If Congress and the White House are not content with how bureaucrats and judges have interpreted a statute, they can simply enact new laws. (A few years ago Guido Calabresi offered the interesting proposal that instead of rewriting vague or obsolete statutes, judges should have the power to invalidate them and return them to the legislature for reworking.) But this is a perilously weak argument, first because legislators and chief executives cannot possibly monitor the myriad decisions of the bureaucratic-judicial regulatory branch, but more important, because there is nothing "simple" about enacting new laws.

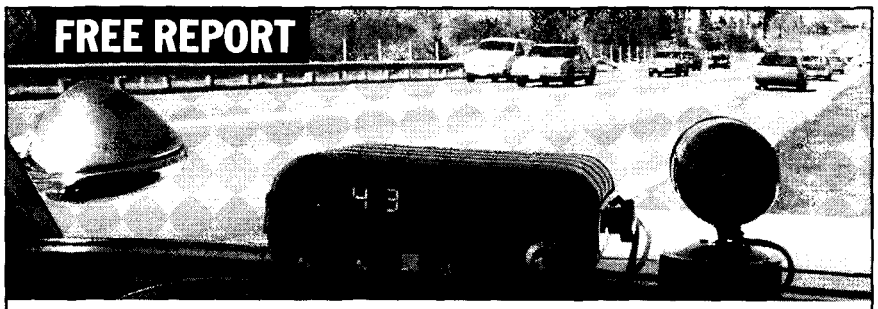
Statutory lawmaking is such an arduous process that bureaucratic and judicial "misinterpretations" can't readily be corrected even by elected officials committed to doing so. When, in the spring of 1989, the Supreme Court rewrote the Civil Rights Act to require plaintiffs to establish discriminatory intent (thus reversing a long-standing interpretation that had put the burden on defendants for explaining why they had hired so few women or minorities), large majorities in both the House and Senate voted to reinstate the old rule. Although Congress could not have made its disagreement with the Court any clearer, the bill failed to become law because the lawmakers lacked the two-thirds vote to override George Bush's veto. As a result, the Supreme Court can stick by its rewritten version of the Civil Rights law, and we must obey.

Lawmaking by bureaucrats and judges is not a new phenomenon, of course. In the famous "murdering heir" case of 1889, a New York state court in effect inserted the words "unless the legatee murdered his testator" into a state law that entitled legatees to inherit under wills that met all the proper formalities. The state legislature simply hadn't considered the possibility that an heir who precipitated the death of a benefactor might not deserve to receive the inheritance. Federal courts also were eager to insert the innocent-sounding term "reasonable" into the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, and thereby protect from dismemberment all sorts of efficient industrial combinations (including corporations themselves) that, under a literal reading of the statute, would have been illegal.

As Morton Keller informs us, unelected bureaucrats and judges have been making laws at least since the emergence of the large business enterprise. Keller does not think that this is a problem. He rejects the view that Progressive-era legislation was only a mask behind which the leaders of big business, regulators, politicians, and judges crafted an unholy alliance to further consolidate economic power. To Keller, regulatory agencies and courts simply enlarged upon the pluralist institutions already in place. Although removed from democratic politics, bureaucrats and judges were subjected to the same turbulent mix of political interests.

Keller is not a theorist of the regulatory state. His approach falls within the distinguished tradition of academic foxes who know many little things but eschew a single, large organizing principle of the kind that attracts intellectual hedgehogs. Keller treats the reader to detailed accounts of how pre-New Deal bureaucrats and judges reinterpreted antitrust laws, developed entire systems of railroad and utility rate regulation, designed rules governing automobiles and their carriers, created an entire branch of law devoted to corporations, devised rules for copyrights and patents, prevented advertising deception, regulated the labor unions, governed agriculture, overseas housing, and zoning, and established rules for banks and insurance companies. America's regulators and judges were far busier before the New Deal than is commonly supposed.

Still, for all his success in showing the complexity of early twentieth-century regulation, Keller never quite summons up the energy to address what was certainly becoming a paradox, if not a problem, by the 1930s. As the regulatory state steadily grew, the swirl of competing interests that surrounded it (and that, if Keller is to be believed, kept it marginally attuned to public needs in its first decades) had less and less effect on it. The growing bureaucracy and judicial system became less permeable, in the sense that only the loudest and wealthiest voices could gain access.



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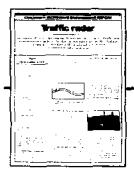

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When it came to rescuing the American economy from the Depression and then winning the Second World War—clear goals that were broadly supported—there was no reason for the public to distrust its non-elected government. Both tasks required the best expertise available; democratic accountability had little to do with it. But when these emergencies were over, the issue of accountability re-emerged. In fact, during the late 1940s and 1950s the public's awakening to the depredations of totalitarianism gave new voice to concerns about rule by unelected "experts" and "social engineers." Yet the ever more complex, mixed economy that emerged from the Depression and the war could not be run like a town meeting; bureaucrats and judges needed ample discretion.

A solution, of sorts, came in the form of administrative process. The Administrative Procedure Act of 1946 was supposed to create miniature legislative hearings and miniature trials inside regulatory bureaucracies. The federal courts were to oversee these miniature processes, and ensure their essential fairness. The purpose of administrative procedure was to render regulations consistent with what the public's elected representatives had intended—or at least would have intended had they been acting "reasonably," in light of the specific facts and varied circumstances that came before the bureaucrats and judges. It seemed a perfect accommodation of democratic ideals with the practical necessities of running a complex economy.

Bureaucrats and judges were not to make law. The purpose of administrative procedure was to render regulations consistent with what the public's elected representatives had intended. In a celebrated book of the era, titled simply *The Legal Process*, Henry Hart and Albert Sacks advised judges that, to solve hard cases of statutory interpretation, they "should assume, unless the contrary unmistakably appears, that the legislature was made up of reasonable persons pursuing reasonable purposes reasonably." Ernest Freund, another eminent legal scholar, suggested that where the law was ambiguous, judges should "promote sound law and sound principles of legislation."

As Cass Sunstein points out, these administrative processes and admonitions of "reasonableness" simply masked the old reality of bureaucratic and judge-made regulatory law. They supposed that the consensus could always be discovered about the "reasonable" way to interpret and to apply ill-defined statutes. But this remarkably sunny outlook is naive in a heterogeneous society whose ends and means are hotly contested. It was naive in the 1950s; it is even more naive today.

In the contentious late twentieth century, bureaucrats and judges have little guidance. Legislation often reflects such sharply divergent views that elected officials duck the hottest issues, leaving them to bureaucrats and judges to figure out. There are no neutral processes that can be relied upon, because access to the agencies and courts is reserved for the best organized and wealthiest parties; there are no "reasonable" interpretations, because there is no consensus about what's reasonable.

To make matters worse, statutes are becoming obsolete more quickly than ever. Rapid changes in technologies and norms are forcing bureaucrats and judges into action. In 1965, for example, Congress excluded "sexual deviants" from visiting the United States, and stipulated that homosexuals were included in the category. But public norms have changed in the interval: in 1979 the American Psychiatric Association stopped listing homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder. So bureaucrats in the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the federal judges watching over them, have made new law, granting admittance to avowed homosexuals. Elected officials sometimes catch up with changing technologies and dominant norms (just a few weeks ago Congress changed the law to allow homosexuals entry into the country), but in the meantime bureaucrats and judges have no option but to fill in.

Sunstein calls for an end to this charade. He suggests that bureaucrats and judges (his argument is addressed explicitly to judges, but he notes that it applies to civil servants as well) stop pretending that they are mere agents of elected officials, merely discerning what legislators intended when they enacted a vague or obsolete statute, or what they would have done had they anticipated the present circumstances. Bureaucrats and judges should make new law explicitly and openly. But rather than bow to their own views of what's in the public interest, or succumb to the blandishments of special interest, their lawmaking should follow "interpretive principles."

Sunstein's argument is not as radical as it may appear. There already exist many "canons" of statutory interpretation—rules of thumb, developed over many years, for how judges (and, implicitly, bureaucrats) ought to discern the meaning of statutes that often have little meaning to begin with. Take, for example, the principle of *expressio unius est exclusio alterius*, meaning, simply, that to include one thing presupposes the exclusion of something else. Thus when a statute that creates a new benefit program includes a listing of the categories of people entitled to receive it, bureaucrats and judges presume that someone who doesn't fit into any one of the categories is not eligible (even though the legislator may never have considered the issue). Sunstein wants to push these guidelines much further, toward rules of thumb for creating good regulations.

Sunstein notes that some of his principles are already utilized implicitly by bureaucrats and judges. One principle, for example, is a first cousin to Calabresi's proposal for legislative remand: broad delegations of policy-making authority to bureaucrats are to be avoided where important rights are at stake. A statute that seems to allow low-level officials to decide whether entire groups of people are eligible to receive an important benefit or protection should be interpreted very narrowly. The reason for such a principle is evident: in a democracy, elected officials should make such sensitive decisions directly. (The Supreme Court followed this principle in *Hampton* v. *Mow Sun Wong*, a 1975 case striking down a Civil Service commission rule excluding aliens from federal government employment, since neither Congress nor the president had directed the commission to issue such a rule.)

Another of Sunstein's interpretive principles, implicit in decisions of bureaucrats and judges, is: where statutes fail to specify who has "standing" to participate in the design of, or complain about the implementation and enforcement of, regulations made pursuant to them, bureaucrats and judges should allow a wide range of people to participate when the harms to be avoided are broad and systemic, like environmental hazards. Another principle is: laws should be interpreted so that their aggregate social benefits are at least proportional to their aggregate social costs. Thus it makes no sense to interpret health and safety legislation so broadly as to require that the public pay far more for products that meet the new standards than any reasonable measure of the health or safety thereby achieved.

Most of Sunstein's principles are commonsensical, which is their strength and their weakness. It's hard to find fault with a principle that favors political accountability where important rights are at stake, or which opts for a reasonable balance between the social costs and social benefits of government initiatives. A legal system that consciously adopted Sunstein's principles would seem to generate

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better regulations than the current system. At lower levels of abstraction, however, the principles become less helpful.

What exactly do we mean by political accountability? How should we measure social costs and benefits? In the end, Sunstein falls into the same trap that legal commentators of the 1950s fell into when they tried to develop neutral principles of statutory interpretation based on "reasonableness." Despite his cautious explication, Sunstein's principles presume a public consensus about what characterizes "good" regulation. When applied to concrete cases, they crash into the disconcerting reality of a society whose central organizing precepts—what is public and what is private, what we hold in common and what we should be free to do as individuals, what is just and what is fair—are up for grabs. As a practical matter, bureaucrats and judges who sought to apply Sunstein's interpretive principles would probably come out exactly where they come now, only they would have a new set of justifications for their decisions.

There is no getting around the central dilemma. Could unelected bureaucrats and judges use better guidance on how they are to discover the public interest? Of course. But whatever processes or guidelines are established to help them in their task, there is no escaping the fact that bureaucrats and judges will be invoking their own values and ideals. The appropriate democratic response is not to try to prevent this from occurring. Elaborate administrative procedures, guidelines, reviews, and standard operating procedures have the effect of suffocating regulatory bureaucracies, stifling creativity, and clogging the federal courts. The best response is, first, to facilitate accountability by having regulatory agencies publish clear statements of what they intend to accomplish and how they are willing to be evaluated; and, second, to ensure that talented and dedicated people are drawn to, and selected for, these difficult jobs. For at least a decade, the American government has rigorously neglected both of these principles. ●

TRB *continued from page 4*

eral Motors signed profit-sharing contracts with the United Auto Workers in 1984. In return, the union got a variety of rules to limit layoffs. The average Ford worker collected more than $13,000 in profit-sharing between 1984 and 1989, but will get nothing for 1990. Major companies in Japan, which are famous for their no-layoff policies, pay about a third of their wages in the form of bonuses that are implicitly tied to the company's profits. Studies have shown that people feel, however irrationally, that reducing or eliminating a regular bonus is a fair way of adjusting to bad times whereas cutting wages strikes them as unfair.

How can society move toward a share economy? There are already laws on the books giving a variety of lavish tax breaks to companies that form ESOPs, or employee stock ownership plans. Unfortunately, ESOPs have become mainly a dodge for investment bankers, who use them to leave companies saddled with debt, and employees without a secure retirement (because the ESOP has replaced their pensions and retiree health care). Most of the benefit of the tax breaks goes to the shysters, not to the workers.

Workers might be more enthusiastic about sharing bad times if executives were also sharing. But it rarely works that way. For 1989, when GM workers saw their profit share cut by 82 percent, to a mere $50, the bonus for Chairman Roger Smith dropped just 7 percent, to $1.4 million, and he got an 11 percent raise in salary. The difference between the average worker's salary and that of the CEO continues to climb. It was a multiple of 41 in 1960; it's 93 today.

Sharing the recession is, well, depressing. But there's a bright side to sharing, too, if it takes the form of shared workload as well as shared pay cuts. Contrary to widespread belief, Americans work far too hard—or at least they work far too long. The average American worker, after five years on the job, gets a total of twenty-three paid holidays and vacation days. A German gets forty. A Japanese is entitled to thirty-six and actually takes about twenty-nine.

Clearly the problem with our economy is not that we're not putting in enough hours. Leaving aside the question what lawyers add to the economy anyhow, heroic late-night marathons by Wall Street lawyers seem especially absurd when their colleagues are being laid off. Surely it makes more sense from every point of view for the many to trade slightly smaller incomes for slightly more time off than for an unlucky few to have more time off than they want and no income at all.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 3*

No-fault exchange

To the editors:

In commenting on C-SPAN's coverage of the Persian Gulf crisis in his Washington Diarist ("Hearty Fare," December 24), Morton Kondracke harshly but erroneously faulted a brief exchange I had on air casualties in the Vietnam War with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Senator John McCain during a November 28 hearing by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

In questioning Dr. Kissinger, I mentioned the high number of civilian casualties of the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam—an estimated 52,000 killed. Senator McCain initially challenged my use of that large number, under the mistaken impression that I was talking about the Christmas bombing of North Vietnam in 1972. I was referring to the entire war, as the senator quickly realized, and a few minutes later he himself spoke of "52,000 casualties over a seven- or eight-year period."

EDWARD M. KENNEDY
Washington, D.C.

The writer, a U.S. senator, is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Whodunit?

ISSUE ONE: GORBY. HE'S REALly in trouble this time. The columnists who have been saying every six months for the past five years that he's on his way out are saying, again, that he's on his way out. Maybe this time they're right. Inevitably, there will come a moment when that prediction corresponds to reality, just as there comes a moment when a picture of a watch tells the correct time. That doesn't mean you should cut the picture out and tape it on your wrist, though.

RIGHT NOW EVERYONE FROM ANthony Lewis to William Safire agrees that Gorbachev is showing every sign of becoming the front man for the reaction to his own revolution. And they're right. But—for the moment at least—it remains true that judged on his record so far, Gorbachev must be counted a great liberator. Among the leaders of "responsible" (i.e., conservative) opinion in Washington, there has been, all along, a dogged refusal to recognize this. Instead we've had five years of grudging sourness. It makes you wonder . . .

WASHINGTON—A wave of delirious Linco-mania has gripped fashionable opinion in this capital. But before the swooning gets out of hand, before "Honest Abe" is acclaimed as Man of the Year or (heaven forfend) Man of the Decade, it's time to put some recent events in perspective.

First of all, there has been entirely too much loose talk about how Abraham Lincoln has "freed the slaves." To be sure, he has now issued what he is pleased to call an "Emancipation Proclamation." This is winning him some cheap applause from his dwindling band of admirers—most of whom, by the way, are foreigners. Though Lincoln's political stock has tumbled disastrously at home, it remains mysteriously high abroad, especially among woolly-minded English liberals.

But as more level-headed observers here realize, this latest gambit by the soi-disant Emancipator is a typical Lincolnian waffle. It "frees" the slaves in the rebel states, while leaving those in Union states in chains. In other words, Father Abraham has generously liberated those slaves he has no control over, while doing nothing to alleviate the conditions of those he might actually be in a position to help.

The list of Lincoln's failures is embarrassingly long, or would be if his claque were capable of embarrassment:

Item. Though a professed defender of human rights, Lincoln has shown no hesitation in using the secession crisis as cover to "suspend" the most important such right, that of habeas corpus.

Item. Lincoln often deplores violence, yet within weeks of his taking office the bloodiest war of the century was raging.

Item. Lincoln talks a good game about the need for new thinking ("we must think anew and act anew . . . and then we shall save our country," etc.), but when the time came to name his vice president and possible successor, he insisted on appeasing the pro-slavery interests by reaching for a mediocre oldthinker.

To give Lincoln the credit for the partial limitations on slavery he finally agreed to is an insult to the thousands of brave abolitionists, white and black, who were putting their lives on the line when the railsplitter—or should I say the hairsplitter—was still boasting about having "no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery."

Compare Lincoln's pusillanimity to the courage of a Frederick Douglass or a John Brown, and you have to conclude, in Douglass's words, that Lincoln is "far more concerned for the preservation of slavery, and the favor of the border slave states, than for any sentiment of magnanimity or principle of justice and humanity."

It's time to send the Sage of Springfield back to his log cabin. Let him get a job as a lobbyist for the stovepipe hat industry or an advocate for the differently heighted. Let him do anything but

(cont. p. 94)

I'M BEING PROVOCATIVE. BUT IS the comparison really so outrageous? Unlike Lincoln, Gorbachev had the disadvantage of being shaped (and rewarded) by a tyrannical order. Gorbachev had to come very far very fast, and he did. Since he came to power in 1985, four countries formerly oppressed by Soviet-imposed dictatorships have abolished communism and have established democratic governments with full individual liberties. That's 80 million people set free right there—100 million if you throw in Bulgaria and Romania. Then you've got things like scrapping Soviet expansionism, getting out of Afghanistan, and, on the home front, ending the Communist Party's monopoly of power, holding free elections that brought anti-Communists to power in Russia and five other Soviet republics, and freeing the press to the point where not only are there thousands of new publications but even the "official" press publishes every formerly forbidden author from Orwell to Solzhenitsyn. Who did these things?

WELL, GOES THE ARGUMENT, NOT Gorbachev. He's just a shrewd Communist who figured he could save the regime and the empire by giving way to the inevitable. He really had no choice. But of course he did have a choice; he had many choices. The political system he inherited gave the man at the top a lot of leeway, remember? That's what dictatorship is all about. If the boss has less leeway now, it's because of choices he made earlier. If he is to be blamed for the bad choices he is making now, then he must be praised for the good ones he made before; and if he was the tool of larger forces before, he's the tool of larger forces now. Historical inevitability is a two-way street. Maybe Gorbachev's intention was to save communism; or maybe, as I believe, it was what he said it was: to turn the Soviet Union into a "normal" country, i.e., a law-based commercial republic. But if "good" intentions are not enough to judge a politician by, neither are "bad" ones. At some point speculations about intentions must be put aside and facts given their due.

GORBACHEV'S GREAT INSIGHT WAS recognizing that political liberalization was the only key to his country's salvation. His great error, the consequences of which are now becoming painfully obvious, was in failing to follow that insight to its logical conclusion. Because he was afraid of losing, he refused to take the risk of a real popular election. The result is the current crisis, which is not so much an economic crisis as a political one—a massive crisis of political legitimacy and political power. The Soviet Union does not have a legitimate government. It has a cacophony of power centers of varying degrees of quasi-legitimacy. The nationalities crisis, which would be formidable in any case, is magnified by the fact that the republican governments are more legitimate, because more freely elected, than the central government. (In the USSR, liberty and union are two and separable.) Yeltsin and Landsbergis were the people's choice. Gorbachev is not. Whether or not he succeeds in clinging to office, his political survival may no longer be compatible with the survival of his program. But if Eduard Shevardnadze's dark prophecy comes true, the next dictatorship will owe its spirit more to Pinochet than to Lenin. In the long view, that is a gain. Totalitarian communism, with its millennial dynamism and global ambitions, is dead, and Gorbachev is holding the smoking gun.

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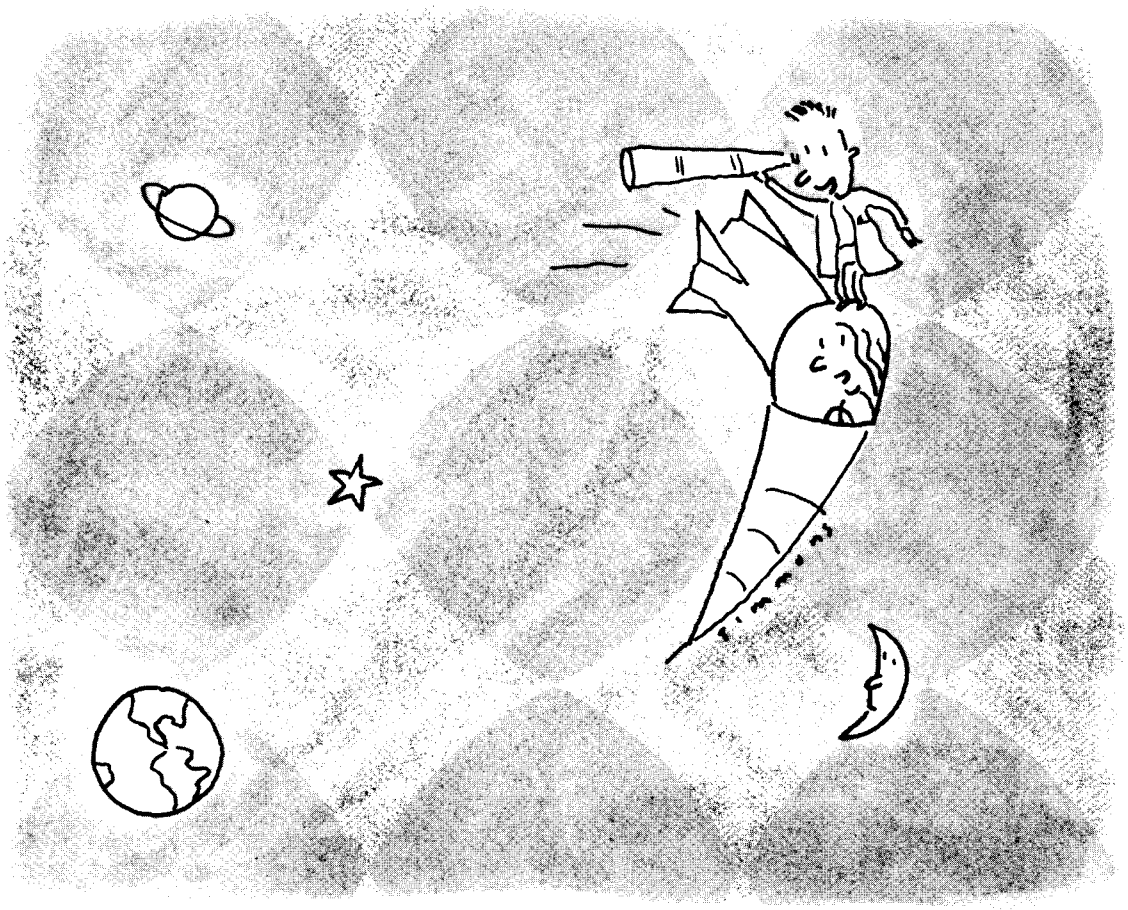

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